OCTOBER–DECEMBER 1951

Crossroads

SUCCESSOR TO THE WESTMINSTER ADULT BIBLE CLASS

A Study and Program Magazine for Adults

VOLUME 2 : NUMBER 1

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Among Our Authors

John Wick Bowman, who has written the *Christian Faith and Life* lessons on "The Story of Jesus Christ," is professor of New Testament at San Francisco Theological Seminary, San Anselmo, Calif. His earlier work of interpreting Christ as a missionary in India has been good background for these lesson articles, and his scholarship—expressed earlier in two books, *The Intention of Jesus* and *The Religion of Maturity*—gives a freshness to the viewpoints he has expressed in these articles.

John Park Lee is turning his attention more and more to the problems of older people. As Director of Welfare Agencies for our Presbyterian Board of Pensions, he was a delegate to the White House Conference on Aging in August, 1950, and his article in this issue of CROSSROADS, "Growing Older," reflects his interest in this subject. He is an elder in the Second Presbyterian Church in Germantown, Philadelphia, Pa.

Our cover picture is a wood carving by Adlai F. Hardin, entitled *The Holy Family*.

October 1, for
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GERMAN CHURCH UNDER RECONSTRUCTION

Doors of Hope

By Howard G. Hageman

WESTERN EUROPE is much in the headlines these days. There have been many articles and surveys about its military strength or its economic potentialities, all written by presumed experts. No doubt you have seen such write-ups in some of your favorite magazines or newspapers. But about the religious strength of Western Europe, or its spiritual potentialities, we hear surprisingly little. Yet these are factors that will finally be far more determinative of the future. Hitler was defeated not alone by superior arms and economic strength, but just as much by the spiritual power and force of soul of the very people he thought he had conquered.

What is of even greater interest is the fact that throughout Western Europe our Reformed and Presbyterian tradition is strong. In Britain you will find Presbyterian churches; on the mainland of Europe they are called Reformed churches. But they are one with us in inheritance and faith. In one summer I worshiped on successive Sundays in five different countries and in five different languages. Yet in every instance, I was worshiping in a Presbyterian or a Reformed church! We are much more of an international fellowship than most of us have ever realized.

And what about these brethren of ours in Western Europe? They have but recently passed through the fiery furnace of a terrible world war, and they live with the threat of another continually hanging over them. They have experienced unbelievable strain and fearful destruction of property; death and danger have been their constant companions. Yet if you were to visit them today, you would find these sister churches strong in their faith and enthusiastic in spirit.

I remember hearing a sermon by one of the well-known Dutch ministers in The Hague. He took as his text *Hos. 2: 15:* "And I will give her . . . the valley of Achor for a door of hope." Pointing out the origin of the valley of Achor in *Josh., ch. 7,* he went on to explain that the valley of Achor means the "valley of trouble." And this was the sum of his sermon: God in Christ can and does give us our valleys of trouble as doors of hope. In the midst of impossible troubles, when all the doors that we try to open slam shut in our

MR. HAGEMAN, minister of the North Reformed Church, Newark, N. J., visited Europe and the British Isles during the summer of 1950.

faces, God through Christ transforms these same troubles into doors of hope by which we pass into new faith and new activity. He did it on Calvary; he does it over and over again. He has done it before our very eyes. For do we not serve him who said, "I am the door"?

And that is exactly what has been happening in our sister churches in Western Europe. The valley of indescribable trouble through which they have passed has become a door of great hope. On all sides there is renewed activity and vigor in churches that but a few years ago were thought to be dead. In lands such as Holland or France, before the war the Reformed churches were reaching only a tiny fraction of the people. For the laboring classes, for the intellectuals, and for young people, the church had virtually ceased to exist. Church attendance was miserably small, and worst of all, there was a widespread acceptance of this situation.

The terrible shock of the war has changed all that. I do not mean that in this postwar era the church has suddenly found itself at the center of a great popular movement. It is still a minority and is likely to remain one for a long time to come. But it has awakened from its long sleep to realize its situation and is putting forth everywhere heroic efforts to recapture European man for the gospel. Financial resources are strained, and physical resources are sometimes pitifully inadequate. But its spiritual confidence and power are magnificent!

THESE brethren of ours in Western Europe have rediscovered the meaning of the Christian community. They have realized that membership in the congregation of Jesus Christ is totally different from membership in any other society. For many years they have known the church as an institution that they took for granted. Now they are discovering it as a new nation in which membership is as much of a vocation as the ministry itself.

In a particular area in Holland, for example, the Nazi occupation authorities soon realized that the Dutch Reformed pastors in that section were the real spearheads of opposition to their program. So they removed them all, executing the worst offenders and sending the rest to concentration camps. But in these congregations, there were enough devout elders to take over, until the Nazis removed them too.

Then, in desperation, these churches appealed to the synod for help. Without ministers, without elders, they were unable to hold services and were faced with probable dissolution. But the synod replied that it was unable to help them; they would have to help themselves. And that was just what they did. Lay members of these congregations—butchers, bakers, lawyers, bus drivers—took over the services, the preaching, and the pastoral work—and the church continued to live! But a butcher or a baker or a bus driver cannot assume such responsibilities without gaining a totally new insight into the meaning of church and congregation.

In the background of this revival there are any number of similar experiences. In some places men and women who had never come to church in their lives began to attend. Evening services that had once numbered thirty or forty swelled to three and four thousand. They came, not simply out of curiosity, but because they wanted to hear the truth—the truth of the Bible and of the Christian gospel. If faith is rediscovered in such circumstances, it is not likely to be given up lightly or surrendered easily.

This renewed activity has, however, raised a new problem. We must recognize that, although many thousands have been touched, there are many more thousands who remain lost to the church. They still never cross its threshold. How is the gospel to be brought to them, translated into terms that they will understand, terms that will force them to consider it? There is only one way. The bus driver, the shopgirl, the lawyer, the merchant—all lay leaders must be trained to be just as effective agents in the spreading of Christian propaganda as their opposite numbers are of Communist propaganda.

At great expense and with painstaking effort, communities like that in Iona, Scotland, have been formed; academies like the Church and World Institute at Driebergen, Holland, have been founded. They have one aim—to train laymen and laywomen intensively, so that they may become effective Christian agents in their own communities. It is no superficial training that they receive, either! Theology, Church history, sociology, and similar subjects are part of the discipline taught them, in many instances, by laymen.

Congregations have been broken down into block units with a trained leader in charge of each block. These groups, meeting weekly, study the Bible with their leader and seek forms of missionary activity that they can carry out right in their own blocks. Of the 1,800 Reformed congregations in Holland, more than 300 are now organized in this fashion, and their number is growing. The time may well come when we in America shall have to learn from our brethren in Western Europe what it means to organize and carry out a serious Christian program of lay evangelism.

Toward the close of the war, the Nazis wantonly destroyed one of the finest residential sections in The Hague. In an area about twelve blocks long and six blocks wide every home was taken down, and today nothing is left there but an ugly wilderness of weeds and rubble. At the very edge of that devastated area a new Dutch Reformed church was built recently, the Maranatha Kerk. It is a simple kind of building, with clear-glass windows. Sitting in the pews, you can look out of the window and see this terrible scene of destruction stretching on every side. But as you turn away from it, there, carved on the pulpit is the text, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." That church symbolizes the whole Church in Western Europe—a valley of trouble that God in Christ has made a "door of hope"!

What Is "Church Comity"?

By Merlyn A. Chappel

COMITY is an unfamiliar word for a great idea. It's a word and an idea that we ought to know more about. Mark Rich, in *Rural Prospect,* defines church comity as "a plan devised for aiding communities to have one church or only as many churches as the population warrants." Church comity at its best means genuine interdenominational co-operation. A dictionary definition of comity is just plain "courtesy."

There is nothing new about the basic idea behind religious comity. The Book of Joshua devotes the best part of nine chapters to the story of the planned entrance of the Children of Israel into Canaan, the Promised Land. This entrance was made on a tribal assignment basis. True enough, the plan was ordered by one man, Joshua, whereas church comity is the result of an agreement by the leaders of various denominations. It is also true that Joshua's plan was based upon a military-religious alliance. Again, it is true that Joshua's plan did not work very many years. Tribal pride and self-centeredness ruined a great idea —just as exaggerated denominational loyalty has injured Protestant work in many modern "promised lands." However, Joshua's strategy has much that is valuable for us.

John Stirling, in *The Bible Today,* sums up this lesson in a few sentences: "There was land enough for all. The allotment had to be made according to the will of God. It was not so much a possession that was to be divided as a responsibility that was to be shared. The gift of the land was a sacred trust. The country had to be cleared and cultivated. The different peoples were to look upon each other as brothers."

About three thousand years after Joshua, that is, in 1899, representatives of several Protestant denominations sat around a table in New York to make plans for the religious occupation of another "promised land." This time the military phase was over. Religious freedom and the open Bible had come to the little island of Puerto Rico. Mission Board leaders—Presbyterian, Methodist, Congregational, and others—knew that unless a good plan of occupation was agreed upon and lived up to, the various Churches would get in one another's way and once again injure the cause of Christ. So, with the exception of San Juan, the capital, the territory of Puerto Rico was divided into zones of opportunity. The rightness of this plan was strikingly demonstrated on March 13, 1949. On that day, no less than forty thousand people, representing nearly every denomination at work on the island, gathered in San Juan to celebrate fifty years of freedom of worship. Such was some of the good fruit of a comity agreement, conceived in prayer and faithfully adhered to.

Mr. and Mrs. Hudson and family moved to Los Angeles as part of the great shift in population during the past ten years. Until their new bungalow was built, they lived in a trailer camp. They also were building a new church home, for they were members of the new Covenant Presbyterian Church, located in the fast-growing Westchester section of Los Angeles.

Early in the nineteenth century a comity agreement was entered into by the Congregational and Presbyterian Home Mission Boards. This agreement was never broken. But, as our population moved westward, denominational rivalry for possession of new territory developed. In *Rural Prospect* we read: "It is said that when the railways extended westward, a missionary of one denomination could be seen riding the cowcatcher of the engine in order to arrive in town ahead of his less adventuresome competitor who rode the seats of a day coach. So the United States has been, in the large, churched competitively."

DR. CHAPPEL is a secretary for the Presbyterian Board of National Missions. This article is related to the 1951-1952 mission-study theme, "Churches for Our Country's Needs."

It must be admitted that there is still not enough church comity, even though we have engines without cowcatchers! Yet, the national trend among major denominations is encouraging.

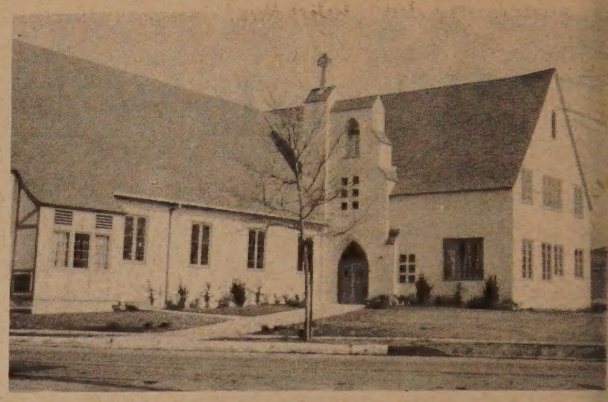
Let us drop in at a meeting of Protestant Church Extension leaders in one of our larger metropolitan centers. On the wall is a multicolored map of the city and its suburbs. This particular city has experienced a heavy increase in population, due to the arrival of a number of new industries with their attendant new housing areas. Conscious of the menace of what we may call "respectable secularism"—prosperous living with little or no consideration of God—these church leaders are determined to find a way to furnish Christian service for the multitude of newcomers—American folks who seek and need a community. These newer residents are largely young married couples with a Protestant heritage. The immediate requirement is for a place to hold a Sunday school and a worship service. A recent survey of the area shows that Sunday school teachers are available. The leaders around the table know that lost years of Christian nurture for children may mean a spiritually lost generation of adults. That is why they want this new "promised land" divided as fairly as possible among the various denominations, allotting to each according to its ability to cultivate the field, which would mean church comity on a high level.

CHURCH comity at its best is not a referee to keep one denomination out of another's field. Church comity at its best is a wide open door, through which each party to the agreement may enter, either in union with another or as a single denomination that will do its part in furnishing Christian service to people who would otherwise be left without it.

One of the most interesting examples of good comity fulfillment is to be found in Richland, Washington, administrative center for the Hanford Atomic Energy works. In Richland there are four United Protestant Churches, each one with its own district. Although each church ministers to its entire district, regardless of the denominational background of the people who live there, each church is attached to some particular denomination. Interestingly enough, the present home of the Presbyterian United congregation is the Marcus Whitman school. Richland is well churched, and there is a strong spirit of unity.

Our Presbyterian leaders in metropolitan areas all over the country report great new church development progress under comity agreement. This is true of most denominations, although some still ignore comity lines.

Dr. Ernest Trice Thompson, in his interesting book *The Changing South and the Presbyterian Church in the United States,* says of church comity: "Ideally no denomination should form its own plans without taking other denominations in its confidence. Comity principles should be drawn up in which every denomination agrees that it will undertake no new work until it has discussed the issue with other denominations. No Protestant denomination has the strength, financial or otherwise, to meet the needs of our growing American cities, and if we are really seeking first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, we will plan to use our total resources to the best advantage."



WHITTIER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, WHITTIER, CALIF., ONE OF THE NEW CHURCHES BUILT UNDER COMITY

THE streamlined, fast-moving "covered wagon" train of our day is mass migration, Americans changing their residence on an unprecedented scale. In one single decade, 1940-1950, this has been true of half the population of the United States. A second decade of mass migration seems to have begun.

To hold up our Presbyterian end of the task of helping to provide church facilities for these millions of resettled Americans will demand millions of dollars within the next few years. Weighing the available funds and then looking out upon the fields, one could become discouraged. On the West Coast, where the population increase has been greatest, one is overwhelmed by the scores of miles of unchurched communities. Now the tide is rising in the East—in cities like Pittsburgh, where a wave of industrial expansion may bring in a great number of new families.

An amazing situation is developing in the open country, especially around our smaller cities. A new American—the "rurban man"—has appeared. He likes the spaciousness of a home in the country, even though it means a long journey to his place of work in the city. Rural America was largely churches without comity agreements. As a result, thousands of rural Protestant churches have very poor equipment and many are pastorless. New and better churches and adequate programs are needed to enlist the "rurban" family, surrounded as it is by an environment that is rural in character. It would be tragic to repeat the errors of the past and again witness the advent of competing denominations.

New fields in city or country should be occupied only in this spirit of co-operation and with the wise strategy of a planned campaign. Each denomination should enter its assigned field of opportunity, not for its own sake, but for the sake of a Christian America.

At lunch one day, John Park Lee said to some of us, "Successful old age begins in childhood." That was a new idea to us, and he elaborated on it. What he said then we asked him to say again in this article.

GROWING OLDER

By John Park Lee

When I was a boy and heard a minister pray, "O Lord, grant us more than we can ask or think," I felt that he was laying it on a bit thick. Now that I'm older and, I hope, wiser, I understand the wisdom of that petition.

Life's greatest tragedy often consists of getting what we want. We work, sweat, sacrifice, even connive, to get something. We get it, and then find out it wasn't what we wanted after all. And so our "success" turns sour. The trouble was and is that we don't want the important things. We settle for the obtainable, get it, and then find it wasn't worth the effort.

Man has always wanted long life. He has prayed for it; philosophers have described the way of life most likely to provide it; physicians and scientists are now bringing it to us. And now that we in America are living longer, as a group, than any people ever have before, we are pretty miserable about the whole business.

Committees on the Aging are being formed; articles fill our newspapers and magazines; men running for public office make great promises. But the emphasis is not on rejoicing over this great achievement in lengthening man's life span, but in discussing the "terrible" aspects of longer life and bemoaning the new "problems" longevity is creating.

The church has labored to prepare children and young people for life, has guided them through the middle years, and now seems gravely disturbed that so many older people fill its pews. Pastors, too frequently, have no message for old age; candidates tend to shun a church with a preponderance of old people; the church seems almost to resent those who live beyond the psalmist's fourscore years.

Tragedy—a national tragedy—is in the making if we continue to think with repugnance of old age, if we regard older people as liabilities and burdens, and if we bemoan their steady increase in our midst. Longevity as a means to an end is a proper thing to ask of God. But now that he has made it possible for us to live longer, we must use his gift so that it becomes what he meant it to be—a blessing.

There is a vast difference between what old age may be and what too often it becomes. The vital fact for all of us to keep before us is that we are today, at this minute (in our reaction to these words), determining the kind of person we shall be. Successful old age begins in childhood, continues through adolescence into early and later middle age, and can continue to develop on into the sixties, seventies, eighties, and even nineties.

The Calendar May Lie!

Life is not, as some have described it, an ascending curve, reaching its peak in middle life, and then descending into old age. That curve plots only one phase of life—physical life. It is not even a true picture of productive life for all men. It is true that our modern industrial machine seems to condemn men to inactivity after, say, sixty-five, but we know of many beyond that fateful period who show creative and productive abilities, even up to their final hour.

The trouble with so many of the modern approaches to "the problem of aging" is that it is being attacked piecemeal. It is being done by specialists, each of whom studies some phase of man and then generalizes from his special study to draw inadequate conclusions. Man isn't a machine of parts, made uniformly, and of equal strength and durability, so that he "wears out" all at once, like the Deacon's "wonderful one-hoss shay." Not even his body ages as a whole. All our organs, physiological systems, bones, and glands develop and change at differing rates. A doctor, examining a man of sixty, will tell him, "You have a heart of a man of forty-five." Lots of us have "old eyes" in our youth. Many experience premature white hair. The examples are endless.

A man's mental capacities bear little relationship to his calendar age. The reaction time of his nervous system may slow down a bit as he grows older, but his ability to think, to plan, to create, and to judge are not necessarily limited by the passage of the years.

In the realm of our emotions we are again not tied in with the calendar. Some achieve self-understanding and emotional control very early. Most of us acquire it slowly and painfully through the years. Some, unhappily, never do, and remain emotional children all their lives.

Even greater is the separation between man's spirit, or soul, and his calendar age. No limit is imposed by the movement of the earth around the sun on man's ability to grow in this phase of his life. It seems as if

the very changes that take place in our bodies and in our reactions—changes that we think of as limitations or handicaps—actually free us from material concerns to give us greater opportunity for a closer correspondence with God and for a deeper understanding of our fellow men.

Time, then, becomes merely a measuring device, a useful index, that man has discovered for purposes of study and comparison and for the conduct of his affairs. But as a handicap or burden, as a limitation or barrier to man's more abundant life, it has no meaning. Man has a share and a promised participation in the Kingdom of the Eternal, the one beyond time and space.

A realistic examination of the aging process that first clears out the accumulated debris of false ideas about growing old recognizes, of course, that the later periods of life have hazards, pitfalls, and booby traps of all kinds. God never promised us that he would roll out the red carpet for us, that life would be the proverbial "bowl of cherries," or that we should, because of his love, escape the problems imposed by our temporary dwelling in a natural world. Of course, age has its trials. For most people there are *economic* problems. Security looms large in our thinking. But intelligent planning now, utilization of the various programs now available, and use of the old-fashioned virtue of thrift will enable most people to enter the later years with at least a modest provision for material protection.

Then there are *health* problems. Here, again, action now will help us later. We can work out with our physicians dietary and other health plans, based on careful and regular examinations, and thus be enabled to handle acute situations in time and at least to slow down, if not check, the normal aging of our bodies.

And there are *social* problems. We shall have to live with other people then as now. We want to become the kind of old person whom we know as a blessing to those around him. The way to become that kind of person, then, is to try to be that kind of person now. If you are living in reasonable peace and amity now with your family, your friends, your business associates; if you have learned to subordinate self to the service of others; if you are living by Jesus' law of love; if you are living this way now, you are insuring a placid and happy later life.

If you are now at war with those around you; if you are misunderstood, unjustly blamed, unfairly attacked, deprived of your rights, thwarted and frustrated, you had better get counsel quickly on changing yourself, or you will be in for utter misery later on. All the current feeling will only be intensified then.

Getting Ready to "Grow Up"

What are your interests? Do you now have an avocation in addition to your present job or housework? Do you set aside time for work in your church and your community? Is your life so full and busy that you

(Continued on page 12)

One IN and the Other OUT

A Protestant View of Two Recent Books on Monastic Life

By Jay M. Logan

OUR car was just pulling away from New Melleray, the Trappist monastery near Dubuque, Iowa. We had spent half the afternoon behind the locked doors of the monastery, seeing the monks at prayer and work. Under the guidance of Brother Joachim, we had visited the dining room, sleeping quarters, burial grounds, and chapel. What we had just experienced was too puzzling for words. Then one of our visiting party spoke for the rest of us when he said: "These monks say they are duplicating the life of Christ, but they certainly have a distorted view of the Master's life. There is almost no service in it."

We returned to our job, a Presbyterian youth caravan training center at Dubuque University. There we were teaching twenty-three college-age young men and women the fundamentals of the evangelical faith, so that they could travel for five weeks, spreading the "good news." They, like the men of New Melleray, had come from widely varied locations to Dubuque to study, pray, and think of the nature of God in Christ. But unlike the men of New Melleray, they were not committed to silence! They sang and chatted joyfully —they were often downright noisy! Each believed in "the priesthood of all believers"; each loved the Church and was devoting himself and his substance to Christ's Kingdom. These young people were being prepared to teach little children, to win young people, and to be an example of the faith alive in the world.

It would be untrue to insist that the monastic life is the epitome of Roman Catholicism. There are, of course, many Roman Catholics who do not enter monasteries but, on the contrary, engage vigorously in human service in the outside world. Many Roman Catholics cannot understand why a monk becomes a monk. Yet, in the monastic life are revealed both the strength and the frailty of the Holy See.

And, let's be fair, the Protestant Church, as we know it, is not a greatly enlarged caravan. The young people studying at Dubuque that summer are as much of a minority in the Protestant Church as monks and nuns are only a small segment of Roman Catholicism. Not all Protestants are studious about the faith; not all are wholeheartedly committed to spreading the gospel. At many points Protestantism is ignorant and unconcerned. Still, in the youth caravan there is a spirit that is part of the distinctive genius of evangelical Protestantism.

THE reading public has been exposed to two unusual Catholic books in recent years. The first, *The Seven Storey Mountain,* by Thomas Merton, is the story of the struggles of a young man who, at twenty-six, joined the Trappist monks. The conflicts that led him to take that step are interesting and revealing. Seeking satisfaction in religion, he tried the Quakers and thought William Penn's writings "about as supernatural as a Montgomery Ward catalogue."[1] Then he turned in another direction and became barker at the World's Fair in Chicago for a side-show called "The Streets of Paris." His next outlet was Communism, which he says (characteristically) "lasted, in all, about three months." He became interested in mysticism; studied the catalogue of a Protestant seminary, because he wanted to dabble in theology; and spent the late evenings of 1938 "drinking canned beer and smoking cigarettes, and making silly and excited jokes."

MR. LOGAN is pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Decatur, Ill.

[1] This and the following quotations are from *The Seven Storey Mountain,* by Thomas Merton. Used by permission of Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc.

Merton was obsessed with himself, and each escapade was looked upon as a chance to satisfy selfish cravings. In a sense, the vocation he finally chose reflects the same self-centeredness, for the monastery is a permanent refuge from the world and an opportunity for continuous individual contemplation.

It was while visiting a monastery that he attended Mass with the monks. He reports: "The silence, the solemnity, the dignity of these Masses of the Church, and the overpowering atmosphere of prayers so fervent that they were almost tangible choked me with love and reverence that robbed me of the power to breathe. I could only get the air in gasps." Watching the monks in that frame of emotion, he concluded: "This is the center of all the vitality that is in America. This is the cause and reason why the nation is holding together. . . . They [the monks] are winning for it the grace and the protection and the friendship of God."

So, after long struggle, Thomas Merton locked the gate of the world behind him and became "enclosed in the four walls of my new freedom," the life of silence in a Trappist monastery. Just before finally taking this step, he had momentarily changed his direction and tried social work with the Negroes in Harlem. But this lasted only a few weeks. Nostalgia hit him: "No, it was all too evident: I needed this support, this nearness of those who really loved Christ so much they seemed to see him." So at last he became a monk. One wonders if he was not always trying to escape the world that his emotions were not strong enough to face.

As Protestants we must not scorn the contemplative life too hastily or too harshly. Our busyness, our emphasis on activity, is often our shame and the reason why we seem to lack much vitality in our churches and our lives. We dare not let the monastics feel that they have a monopoly on the grace of God. Protestants who are part of a busy world should—indeed, must—be open to the power that Merton could find only in an isolated existence. Where can we get this power? Most surely from God's Word as it comes alive in the Scriptures and sends us forth into his world in his work.

THE other book, cleverly done and interesting to read, was written by Monica Baldwin, formerly a Roman Catholic nun. After twenty-eight years in a convent, Miss Baldwin left the cloister and has now published her book, *I Leap Over the Wall*.

Here is her message to us: "To leap successfully, you need a sense of humor, the spirit of adventure and an unshakable conviction that what you are leaping over is an obstacle upon which you would otherwise fall down!"[2] From that sentence on, the reader is given an eye opener into convent life, and also into the convent view of the life we live outside.

Inside the convent walls the nun wears eight thicknesses of cloth around the head, "my outside turned inwards"; there is censorship of mail and perhaps suppression of it; when walking, one must not swing the arms, and to lift one's eyes is a minor breach of rule. Every discipline necessary is imposed "to arrive at emptiness of mind." Each inmate has a cell, "one chair, a minute folding table and a hard little bed, . . . rough woolen sheets . . . washed only once a year."

Fortunately, Miss Baldwin has a keen sense of humor and a keen mind. What she endured shows as much between the lines as in the printed word.

To those of us in a Free Church this highly revered life of the cloisters in the Roman Communion both stuns and irritates. It is foreign to our concept of discipleship. Christ did retire for quiet prayer. But then he returned to the market place. We believe in retreats. To us, however, the retreat has no validity unless it sends men and women down pathways of service to sinful men.

An article by Kenneth J. Foreman in *The Presbyterian Outlook*[3] calls attention to two flaws in the ascetic life: "It may be (we grant for the sake of the argument) that a Christian can do the world more good by praying for it than by working in it. But it does not follow that those who are not of the world should refuse to be in the world. We cannot best help humanity by trying to be something other than human. To flee from all ordinary human problems, including that ever-present one of guarding our tongues, by the simple expedient of running up a wall of stone between us and the world, and a wall of silence between us and our fellow Christians—this is to shun a task God has set us. Life is full of temptations which we can dodge by simply going into a hole and staying there; but it is no answer to life's problems to refuse to live. Intense longing for heaven is no excuse for suicide.

"A second flaw in the ascetic motive is quite plain in the writings of the monks themselves. What they are after is merit; they are earning their mansion in the skies. The more the merit, the bigger the mansion. This is a glorified selfishness to begin with, and totally out of line with the New Testament revelation. If anything is clear, not only in the New Testament but in the Bible as a whole, it is that we are saved by grace, 'not of works, lest any man should boast.' To erect a ladder from earth to heaven, each rung being a self-imposed misery or frustration, is to misunderstand what the grace of God is. It is to return to the mistake made by most religions: that our only hope is in somehow earning our way into God's favor."

In the Program Guide of this magazine there is a suggested Reformation Sunday study of the reasons why people become Roman Catholics. This article by Mr. Logan provides further material for this study.

[2] This and the following quotations are from *I Leap Over the Wall*, by Monica Baldwin, published by Rinehart & Company, Inc. Copyright, 1950, by Monica Baldwin.

[3] From *The Presbyterian Outlook*, 1 North 6th Street, Richmond 19, Virginia. Used by permission.

The Door and the Shepherd Are One

John 10: 1-18

One day Jesus performed a remarkable miracle. He gave sight to a man who had been blind from birth. This was not the first time Jesus had made the blind to see, but the results of this miracle, as we see them in *John, chs. 9; 10,* greatly overshadow the recorded results of many other miracles of healing.

The principal results of this wonderful work of Christ are three: (1) The man whose eyes are opened sees Jesus as his Lord, confesses him and worships him, and bears witness to the power of God before men. This is a strange reversal of roles. The Pharisees, by right and tradition, ought to have been pastors and teachers of the blind man; yet he is teaching them! (2) The Pharisees, instead of rejoicing in this mighty miracle of sight and faith, bitterly resent this poor man's entrance through the doorway that leads to the fullness of life, and cast him out of their fellowship. By this act the Pharisees turn their backs upon Jesus, the One who gives his people light, and show themselves to be false and heartless shepherds of the flock of God. (3) Jesus, angry at the self-righteousness of the Pharisees, lets them know in no uncertain terms that they are blind indeed who think that they alone can see. Then Jesus is moved by the whole course of events to set forth for us the parable of the Door and the parable of the Shepherd.

When Jesus speaks of a "shepherd," he is thinking of the minister or pastor, or anyone whose task it is to lead a flock. He makes it clear in this parable that a true shepherd, in striking contrast to the attitude of the Pharisees, would gladly lead his sheep straight to the Door through which an entrance is given to safety, security, and abundance of life. That is to say, says Jesus, a true shepherd wants to lead his sheep to Him, to Jesus Christ; for He alone is the Door of the sheep. Like John the Baptist, a true shepherd points to Christ as Saviour and is glad when his own disciples hear him speak and follow Jesus. "He must increase, but I must decrease." Such is the voice of a true pastor as his sheep come nigh to the Door of life.

The false pastor wants to claim the sheep as his own; he wants them for himself, though they do not properly belong to him. The false shepherd sneaks up over the sheepfold, evading the Door, and in strange, harsh tones calls the sheep, vainly hoping that they will follow him. His voice calls attention to himself and not to Christ, and the sheep know that it is the voice of a stranger who is a thief and a robber.

There are many such strange voices today, and they are heard not only in the East, but in the West as well. They are to be heard wherever false prophets and pastors bear witness to themselves, and not to Christ, the Door. Whether in totalitarian or in free countries, wherever any "ism" proudly proclaims: "We know the answers; ours is the true way; we can see clearly where your security lies," there you hear the voice of a blind and false shepherd, an enemy of the Door and of his sheep. Wherever any so-called Christian communion, Protestant no less than Roman, bears witness to itself and not to Christ, saying, "Ours is the way; we are the Door; you must see eye to eye with us if you expect security, freedom, and peace," there the sheep are to be warned to flee, for this is the voice that leads to death and not to life. Behind such voices is the hand of him who is a thief and a robber in the flock of God.

Let there be no mistake. There is one entrance, and only one, to true, secure, and abundant life. It is through the Door that God himself opened when he sent his Son to stand upright in the midst of life. And more, he alone is a true shepherd who unfalteringly and unfailingly leads the sheep to this one only Door.

But where can we find such a shepherd? Where is the pastor, or the church, that can avoid calling attention to itself, even when it earnestly desires to do otherwise? Where is the voice that will unfalteringly and unfailingly lead men to the Door of life? Let the Door himself give answer. "I," he says, "I who am the Door, I am the shepherd of the sheep." The Door and the Shepherd are one. As John Calvin put it long ago, "Christ, having hitherto called himself *the door,* and declared that they who bring the sheep to this *door* are true *shepherds,* now assumes the character of a shepherd, and indeed affirms he is the only *shepherd.*"

It is the voice of this one Shepherd that we must hear if we are to find our way to the Door of life. It is his word alone upon which we can depend as we go in and out from day to day. It is his work alone—which cost him his own life—that delivers us from the snarling teeth of sin, death, and hell. Every pastor, no less than his flock, stands in need of the word and the work of this one great good Shepherd. Without him, apart from his, we are all cowards, we are all hirelings, we are all thieves and robbers. Without him, apart from him, we are all blind, self-righteous Pharisees, loving our own way, and by our words and works turning men from him who is the Door.

But it is not his will that we should be without him; no, nor that any should, even "unto the uttermost part of the earth." It is his will, who knows his sheep, that you and I, and all the others who are his, should hear his voice, heed his word, and follow him, and that there should thus be one flock and one Shepherd. It is to you, therefore, to you personally, just as to the man who had been born blind, that Jesus speaks, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."

—GORDON A. PEDDIE

During the coming year our devotional articles will consider parables that Jesus told about himself. This one, the first in the series, studies those recorded in *John, ch. 10,* as they grow out of the events described in *ch. 9.*

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WHO WROTE MARK AND MATTHEW?

By W. Douglas Chamberlain

This matter of who wrote the Gospels is not only something interesting, but it also helps us to understand these records about our Lord's life.

Dr. Chamberlain, who conducts the helpful "Explain, Please" column in Presbyterian Life, *is professor of New Testament Language and Literature at Louisville Presbyterian Seminary. In our next issue he will discuss the authorship of Luke and John.*

TO ATTEMPT a brief discussion of the authorship of the four Gospels is somewhat like offering a four-year course of medicine in six easy lessons. Nevertheless, this is a legitimate and important matter. I shall do the best I can in the space available, taking each Gospel separately. Even with unlimited space, no one can discuss these problems to the satisfaction of everyone. Two classes of readers will not like my answers: (1) Those whose essenital position is, "If the King James Version was good enough for Paul, it's good enough for me." (2) Those who stand at the other extreme of skepticism about the trustworthiness of the Gospels. I do not subscribe to either viewpoint, and I shall steer a middle course, not because it is safer, but because I believe the truth lies between the positions of the extremists.

The authorship of each Gospel is a problem, because no one of the Gospels presents a claim of the author that he wrote it, as do the letters of Paul. *John 21: 24* is not an exception, for it is not the claim of the author, but of his friends. None of the Gospels state where they were written, or when. These questions must be answered by careful research within the Gospels themselves and in the surviving literature of the first century or so of Christian history.

Let us, therefore, examine Mark and Matthew to learn what we can about their authorship and the purpose behind the writing of them.

THE GOSPEL OF MARK

This is the shortest, simplest, and, in many respects, the most dramatic of the Gospels. After something more than a century of going over them "with a fine-toothed comb," New Testament scholars have reached the conclusion that Mark's is also the oldest. This conclusion is indicated chiefly from four types of evidence:

1. *The subject matter common to the Synoptic Gospels.* It is perfectly clear to anyone who studies the Synoptic Gospels with the aid of a Greek harmony that both Matthew and Luke used Mark's Gospel in their accounts of the life of Jesus. We shall exclude *Mark 16: 9-20* from this discussion, because these verses are not found in the earliest copies of this Gospel. (For this reason they have been printed in smaller type in the Revised Standard Version of the New Testament.) The New Testament books were first written in roll form on papyrus, which becomes very brittle after a few years. Evidently the end of Mark's Gospel was lost before a single surviving copy was made. The authentic original portion ends with the words, "For they were afraid" (R.S.V.). This obviously is not a happy ending for a Gospel. There would be nothing about the resurrection if that were the authentic ending. Christian readers felt the impropriety of this; so several attempts were made to supply the lost ending. The one with which the readers of the King James Version are familiar first appeared in North Africa. Christians in other parts of the Church did not know of this ending.

Of the remaining 661 verses in the Gospel of Mark, Matthew used 606, condensing them into 500 verses in his Gospel of 1,068 verses. If anyone is troubled with the question, "Why did Matthew break up and combine some of Mark's verses?" Let him recall that there were no verse divisions in the New Testament until A.D. 1551. Luke used about 320 verses of Mark's material. Of the 55 verses of Mark that Matthew did not use, Luke used 24, leaving only 31 verses of Mark that neither Matthew nor Luke used. There is no trace of Mark's having borrowed from either Matthew or Luke. Matthew fitted his other material into Mark's framework; Luke did not. These facts indicate clearly that Mark was the earliest of the three.

2. *The common wording of the Gospels.* Not only do Matthew and Luke use much of Mark's material, but they also use many of his actual words and phrases. In other words, they copy sections of Mark verbatim. This is not apparent to the reader of a translation, but it leaps out of the page at the reader of the Greek. This borrowing is of such a nature that Mark could not have been the borrower.

3. *The common order of the narratives.* Matthew follows Mark's order very closely; Luke less so, but he does follow it. When Matthew departs from Mark, Luke follows it; when Luke forsakes it, Matthew supports it. Never once do Luke and Matthew agree against Mark in their order of narrative.

4. *The polishing of Mark's Greek style.* Mark used a rough, unpolished Greek. Matthew and Luke regularly

smoothed up his style, since they were much better writers.

Who wrote the Gospel of Mark? Eusebius, writing in the fourth century, quotes Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis, first half of the second century, as saying: "Mark, who became the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately, but not, however, in order, the sayings and deeds of our Lord, as far as he remembered them. . . . He was particularly careful in one thing, to leave out none of the things that he heard and to include nothing false in them."

This means that the source of the Gospel of Mark was the preaching of Peter, as Mark remembered and recorded it. This Mark is the John Mark of *Acts 12: 12, 25; 13: 5, 13; 15: 37-39; Col. 4: 10; II Tim. 4: 11; Philemon 24; I Peter 5: 13.*

When and where was this Gospel written? Second century tradition and thorough historical investigation indicate that the Gospel was written in Rome soon after the death of Peter, A.D. 64. This, then, is our oldest record of the life and work of our Lord. For this reason, it possesses peculiar value for those who wish to understand the life and ministry of Jesus.

Although this Gospel does not bear the marks of careful arrangement that the others do, it has its own definite plan. It is concerned to answer two questions: (1) Who is Jesus Christ? This is answered in *Mark 1: 1 to 8: 30,* climaxing in Peter's confession, *ch. 8: 29.* (2) What must he do? This is answered in *chs. 8: 31 to 16: 8.*

Try reading this Gospel at one sitting to see what impression it makes on you. If not at one sitting, read a chapter each day until you have finished it.

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

The Gospel to which we attach the name of Matthew was clearly written for Jewish-Christian readers. The title as it stands in the King James Version, "The Gospel According to Matthew," occurs only in very late copies of this Gospel. It is interesting to note that titles of the Gospels as we have them—"According to Mark," "According to Matthew," and so forth—were, in the earliest manu-

scripts, written in a different hand from the body of the book itself. When these titles were written at the head of each Gospel, they simply indicated that this was the story of Jesus as told by Mark, Matthew, and so forth. When the first Gospel, Mark, was written, there was no account of Matthew, Luke, or John to distinguish from Mark's, so such a title would have been pointless.

This Gospel of Matthew is so saturated with interest in the Messianic hopes of the Jews and the fulfillment of these hopes that it has been appropriately called "The Gospel of the Jewish King Rejected." *John 1: 11* is an excellent, but unintentional, summary of Matthew: "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." The author of Matthew paused repeatedly to point out that certain things were done "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet," and other similar expressions. See *Matt. 2: 15, 17, 23; 4: 14; 8: 17; 13: 35; 21: 4.*

The source of this Gospel. Papias, who told us something about the author of Mark, is helpful here also. In his writings he says, "Matthew compiled the *logia* in the Hebrew language and each person interpreted them as he was able." There are three things that should be said about this statement: (1) The word *logia* is a Greek plural that means "sayings." This means, then, that Matthew compiled the sayings of Jesus. (2) In the New Testament and early Christian history, the word "Hebrew" meant "Aramaic," not the classical Hebrew in which most of the Old Testament was written. (3) The expression, "Each person interpreted them as he was able," could mean one of two things: Either each man thought out for himself the meaning of these sayings; or each reader translated, as best he could, from the Aramaic into his own tongue. The latter meaning is much more probable than the former. This means that we have a tradition, going back to the first half of the second century, that Matthew the apostle made a collection of the teachings of Jesus in Aramaic, which Jesus himself spoke, and that this collection was known in the Church of the second century, even among non-Aramaic-speaking Christians.

The next question is, "Is this collection of sayings the same as our canonical Gospel of Matthew?" There are several reasons for thinking that it is not. In the first place, the Gospel, as we have it, is undoubtedly not a translation from Aramaic into Greek. A translation from one language to another, when they are so different in vocabulary, idiom, and syntax as these two, always leaves unmistakable marks of the original, which this Gospel does not do. How, then, is the Gospel of Matthew related to the *logia* of which Papias spoke? Most New Testament scholars identify the *logia* with a source to which they refer as "Q," the initial letter of the German word *Quelle,* which means "Source." It simply designates a source, other than Mark, which was used in composing the canonical Gospel of Matthew. By comparison with the Gospel of Luke, it is fairly easy to isolate this "Source," for both Matthew and Luke used some common source, other than Mark, for about 250 verses in their Gospels. If this source is Matthew's *logia,* it would account for the high value placed upon this Gospel by the Early Church, and the fact that Matthew's name became attached to the longer work. Matthew's was by all odds the most popular Gospel in the Early Church; since it contained almost everything found in Mark's, it would make that Gospel seem more or less unnecessary. This is just what did happen to the Gospel of Mark for a time. If Mark had been more widely used, the loss of the conclusion of the Gospel probably would never have occurred. The great popularity of Matthew's Gospel was no doubt mainly due to the large amount of Jesus' teaching that the Christian reader found there.

As this Gospel is based so largely on a collection of the teachings of Jesus, we would expect to find many of the teachings assembled in one place. Such is the case: the Sermon

on the Mount is given in *chs. 5 to 7;* the instructions on the occasion of sending out the Twelve occur in *ch. 10;* a collection of parables appears in *ch. 13;* the teaching on forgiveness comes in *ch. 18;* the woes upon the Pharisees and the judgment at the end, in *chs. 23 to 25.* Each of these collections of sayings is closed with some such formula as "And it came to pass when Jesus had finished these sayings." As we have said, these teachings, collected and arranged topically, are fitted into the framework of Mark's narrative of the actions of Jesus. For Mark, Jesus was the strong Son of God, the man of action; some forty times he uses the Greek word that means "straightway," heightening the impression of Jesus' dramatic activity. For Matthew, Jesus was the royal Son of David, the hoped-for Deliverer of his people.

THIS Gospel, as we have it, must be later than Mark, since it used Mark so extensively. How much later? The tendency is to date it around A.D. 85. This is to allow time for the development of certain ecclesiastical interests that appear. Some scholars think it might be dated about A.D. 80, or earlier; a few years either way make very little difference. If the author of Matthew used Mark and Q, what is the date of Q? Most scholars tend to date Q at about A.D. 50. This would make Q our oldest source for the teaching of Jesus, as Mark is the oldest source for his deeds. If any reader is troubled because our discussion shows that the authors of Matthew and Luke did not draw their inspiration directly out of the blue, let him recall that Luke specifically states that he had many written accounts before him. It is well also to recall that the writers of the Old Testament books often pause to tell the reader that they are consulting written accounts of the events with which they deal. Something like fourteen of these source books are mentioned in the Old Testament; see *1 Kings 11: 41; 14: 19.*

WHERE was this Gospel of Matthew written? Antioch of Syria seems undoubtedly to be the place. There was a large Jewish population in that great Gentile city; many of these Jews were converted to Christianity. Many Gentiles also were admitted to the church here. (See *Acts 15: 1; Gal. 5: 2.*)

Growing Older

(Continued from page 6)

wonder where each day has gone? Do you have periods used for reading, good solid reading of history, biography, or outstanding fiction? Are you developing an appreciation of music, art, or the drama?

If your answer is yes, you are preparing now against the time when your work—the work you have followed all your life—comes to an end, and when you will want to employ your time, even though no salary comes with it. Your community, your state, yes, and your country have essential work to be done by men who have finished their vocations but who have made themselves available for services in new fields following "retirement."

Our American scene is filled with the gigantic figures of men who have made their greatest contributions to human welfare outside their business and professional lives, in roles for which they had been preparing themselves in their wisely utilized spare time. You know them—Baruch, Stimson, Gifford, Hoffman, Penney, Rosenwald, Rockefeller, Hoover, and a host of others.

If your daily work takes up all your time, you are in danger, terrible danger, of becoming an old man or woman with nothing to do, doomed to boredom and frustration by useless idleness. Plan for your retirement, and know what you are going to do when you wind up your job.

"When I grow up." How often in childhood and youth we have said these words! They carried an implication of something that could be achieved, that someday we would be "grown up." If that were true, it would be really tragic. Because then we would reach a point beyond which there was nothing to come.

But God hasn't planned it that way. He intends us to *keep* growing up. Aging is part of God's plan for man. He expects us to use this gift as he expects us to use all his gifts, wisely and in the service of his Kingdom and to his glory.

Some would question the statement that aging is a gift; yet if we did not age, how terrible life would be! If man remained permanently in adolescence or even in young manhood or in middle age, how desperate his situation! No hope for improvement; no hope for change; no hope for finding what lies beyond the horizon; nothing to look forward to; only the grim, monotonous repetition of daily routine! Actually, viewed from this angle, aging becomes one of the most thrilling and exciting experiences of life. Each new year gives us the chance to live more obedient to God's commandments, to enjoy his blessings, and to find more happiness in the fulfillment of his plans.

We shall continue to grow up every day of our lives; we shall continue to grow up to God.

A Correction

In the January-March, 1951, issue of this magazine Mr. Robert Cashman, author of our article for church officers on endowments, was identified as business manager of McCormick Theological Seminary. We regret this error. Mr. Cashman occupies this position with The Chicago Theological Seminary, which is one of the federated theological schools associated with the University of Chicago.

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CHRISTIAN FAITH AND LIFE
A PROGRAM FOR CHURCH AND HOME

The Story of Jesus Christ

By John Wick Bowman

1

WHEN THE FIRST CHRISTIANS READ THE GOSPEL

Read *Acts 1: 6-11; 3: 11-26.*

In our courts today a witness is a person called to testify to something he has seen or heard. His testimony will strengthen or weaken the case. On the basis of what he says, a man may be forced to pay a heavy fine or be judged innocent, be imprisoned or go free, even be sentenced to life imprisonment or to death. The witness is a crucial person in a trial.

Now the disciples of Jesus Christ are called before the judgment bar of the world to testify, for him. And it is no mere fancy to consider that on the basis of their testimony, his Person, his cause, may be allowed to work freely and honestly among men; or may be imprisoned within the bonds of their silence or actually condemned by the error and sin of their testimony.

From the earliest day of the Christian Church witnessing was the task assigned to followers of the Lord. In The Acts the risen Jesus commissioned the disciples: "You shall be my witnesses"; and in response to that assignment they went, first to Jerusalem and then to the farthest reaches of the Roman Empire, "to the end of the earth." * And as they went, they testified of the things "which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life" (*I John 1: 1* *).

But at first thought it startles us to realize that those early witnesses had no documents to support their testimony. There were as yet no Gospels to be placed in the hands of inquirers. No one, indeed, had thus far even mentioned our Lord in any piece of writing, as far as we know. No doubt there would have been an entry in the files of Pilate's office and in those of the Sanhedrin before whom he had been tried. But these were not open to public scrutiny. And in any case, the bald statement of a few relevant facts about one whom both Jew and Gentile rulers considered a pseudo-Messiah would scarcely have furnished the type of "testimony" calculated to bring men to Christ!

The Content of the Early Witness

There was nothing in writing, no printed Gospel, no bound Bible, then, to tell men about Christ in those early days. There was only the personal testimony of what this Person, Jesus Christ, had meant to his followers.

Of course, these witnesses did not begin their task "cold." The people to whom they spoke knew the *facts* about Jesus. These things had not been "done in a corner," at least, not in Jewry. It was rather the *interpretation* of the facts that would form the major stress of these early disciples. Further, they would not be concerned with *all the facts* about Jesus, however interesting and even instructive these might be in themselves. It would be only those which seemed to contribute to the forming of a clear picture of who Jesus was, of what he had come to do, of what he had achieved, and of how far he had accomplished God's redemptive purpose for man. More especially, it seems clear that that early testimony to Jesus must have contained some reference to his death. This would be a necessary part of the witnessing if for no other reason than that from a worldly and, above all, from a Jewish viewpoint, Jesus' death would seem to have brought to an end his claim that he was the Messiah. The disciple would have to show how his death confirmed rather than nullified that claim.

* Revised Standard Version. All subsequent passages from this version are marked with this symbol.

Now turning to the pages of the New Testament, we find our surmise about the nature of this early witness borne out to a degree. For in the speeches of the book of The Acts, in certain parts of the four Gospels, and in the Epistles, we have the materials for reconstructing what the earliest evangelists had to say about their Master. Let us see what we find there.

In the two speeches of Peter that form part of our lesson materials for today, the facts that are singled out as important for an understanding of Jesus are his miracles, his death at "the hands of lawless men," his resurrection, his exaltation "at the right hand of God," * the gift of the Holy Spirit, the mighty saving power that is at work as a result, and our Lord's return in "the time for establishing all that God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets." * That this formed the outline of the early Christian message may easily be verified from another sermon presented in the record. (*Acts 13: 16-47.*) Indeed, the entire Gospel of Mark, which is the earliest of the four Gospels, is a striking witness to the same general outline. This Gospel is said by the Early Church writer Papias to contain much of the preaching of Peter. And on inspection it proves to consist of a limited amount of our Lord's teachings, somewhat more of his miraculous works, but most of all a lengthy account (*chs. 11 to 16*) of his trial, death, and resurrection, the emphases being exactly the same as Peter made in his two sermons.

Moreover, a study of these and similar passages leaves us with the conviction that all of the early Christian literary product—speeches, Gospels, and Epistles—had an evangelistic motivation. As Luke confesses for himself, his endeavor in writing his Gospel was that his reader might "know the truth concerning the things" (*Luke 1: 4**) that he had been taught about Christ. Equally John wrote that men might "believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (*John 20: 31**).

It is clear, therefore, that the earliest witness to Jesus did not consist of a series of unrelated facts that the hearer was left to piece together as best he might. This early preaching was rather motivated by an evangelistic purpose: It took the known facts and put them together in a way to convict the hearer and to cause faith to spring up in his heart—faith in Jesus as the Christ and as Son of God.

But as we have said, in the earliest period of this evangelistic mission, no written Gospels or other Christian materials to supplement the disciples' oral witness to their Lord were available. However, when men would begin to make such a record, it would seem likely that an account of his death and resurrection would be the first thing to be written down. As Paul later said, a *crucified Messiah* was the greatest of all possible stumbling blocks for the Jew. (*I Cor. 1: 23.*) A clear statement of the final purpose of the death, together with an account of the triumphant resurrection vindicating that purpose, would go far toward expressing the faith of the Church that both these events were somehow included within the plan of God.

What to Look For in This Lesson

1. Why was *witnessing* so difficult in the days of the early Christians?
2. What were the earliest interpretations of the death and resurrection of Jesus? Cite specific New Testament passages.
3. What was the greatest stumbling block to belief in Christ for Jews in those days?
4. How was the promise of Christ linked up to the promise of Abraham?
5. What was the general nature of the early Gospels?

Somewhat later it appeared desirable to supplement this account with a miscellany of items known to one and another of the early Christian assembly. These would include the account of an occasional miracle, a parable, or a short portion of a sermon preached by our Lord, the story of some climactic experience such as Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi and that of the transfiguration before the three disciples, the narrative of some controversy waged with his enemies or of an earnest discussion about a moral or religious issue raised by a friend or disciple. No doubt materials of this sort, which later found a permanent place in the four Gospels, circulated separately in oral or written form at a very early date. These would be woven into the evangelistic witness and would aid in constructing the picture of One who was preached as Lord and Redeemer of mankind.

The Jewish Background

We have already remarked that the earliest Christian evangelists and their hearers were alike Jews and on the whole acquainted with the bare facts about Christ. This was not all that could be taken for granted by those early witnesses to Jesus; for as Jews, both evangelists and evangelized had a common heritage from their fathers. Both alike were "sons of Abraham," * "children of the promise" * and of the covenant God had made with his chosen people; both alike knew the law and to some degree at least reverenced the "traditions" of their people. (*Rom. 9: 3-5.*) There were within the Christian group even some who had been numbered among the priests (*Acts 6: 7*), whereas others had come from among the Pharisees (*ch. 15: 5*) and were accordingly well versed in the "tradition of the elders" and in Jewish lore generally. Paul himself had been a Pharisee (*Phil. 3: 5*), whereas Barnabas was originally a Levite (*Acts 4: 36*), and Stephen was one of many Christians who came from that cosmopolitan and more liberal group of Jews known as Hellenists (*ch. 6: 1-5*).

All of these, whether within or without the Christian movement—evangelists and evangelized alike—had the same "frame of reference." This was the Old

Testament and the culture to which it had given rise. This common knowledge has distinct *advantages* from the standpoint of the Christian faith. Many things could be assumed as known and believed by those listening to the Christian evangelist. For example, the preacher knew that terms like Messiah, Kingdom of God, Saviour, Covenant, Promise, even Gospel and Son of Man, would be recognized and have a thought value for them. Then, too, his Jewish auditors were thoroughly familiar with such ideas as that of the One God, sin, righteousness, judgment, love, and grace. God was for both the evangelist and his audience the Covenant God, the Father and King of his people. Moreover, he could take for granted that they, like the ancient Simeon, were "looking for the consolation of Israel" (*Luke 2: 25* *), that is, for the revelation of the Redeemer, who should save his people from their sins, turn them from their evil ways, and bring in the Kingdom of God. There seems to have been a strong conviction at the time that the coming of such a Figure was not far off and that he would usher in "the day of the Lord" of which Amos had spoken—the day of judgment and salvation.

There were also certain *disadvantages* attaching to the fact that the first people to be evangelized were Jews. As we shall see in lessons later in this quarter, by the first Christian century religion within Jewry had tended to become stereotyped and legalistic. The scribes, by and large, strove to secure conformity to a rigid pattern of conduct that was far from the freedom of the spirit taught by the ancient prophets. Religion had become a matter of outward forms and of the fulfillment of specific rituals and commands. In addition, the rabbis—the religious leaders (Pharisees in the main)—by reason of their exalted position as interpreters of the law had become hard and arrogant. One of their own number at a later date remarked that there were seven kinds of Pharisees and that of these but one was pleasing to God! Our Lord's conflicts with and criticism of this group of leaders are evidence of their essential irreligion and self-righteousness. And many of the high-priestly families (the Sadducees) that controlled the worship of the Temple were no better than their Pharisaic enemies. If anything, they were less ethical in their behavior generally. Certainly (by virtue of their contacts with their Roman overlords), they were more exposed than the Pharisees to the temptations of position.

The early Christian witness to Jesus, then, quite naturally exhibited two things. One was the endeavor to appeal to that background which the Christian evangelists had in common with the Jews. The other was the desire to break down the barriers of self-righteousness and cynicism. The witnessing recorded in *Acts 7: 2-53; 13: 16-41* illustrates both these points.

The Gospel Becomes a "Gospel"

Thus far we have been dealing with the earliest presentation of the gospel by word of mouth. We have seen that in those early days and among the Jewish people the facts of Jesus' life were fairly well known. It was the significance of the facts that required explanation.

Obviously, however, this state of affairs could not last. As soon as the Christian movement worked outward into the Roman Empire, and so away from its original Jewish center, the evangelist could no longer assume that his hearers would know the facts about Christ. To a lesser extent the same would be true even within the Holy Land, with the birth of a generation that had not lived through the time of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ and the founding of his Church.

It was in fulfillment of the need for materials to present both facts and their illumination that our four Gospels were conceived. It is not easy to say just when this occurred. A missionary like Paul may at a very early date have felt the need for such written helps in the Greek-speaking world. Possibly the Greek word descriptive of Mark's function ("minister"), a word

Christian Faith and Life Lessons for Adults, 1951-1952

Jesus Christ the Lord

October-December, 1951

"The Story of Jesus Christ"

After an introductory lesson to show why the story of Jesus Christ was ever recorded at all, this unit takes us first to the Old Testament to describe how the world was prepared by God for the coming of his Son. Four lessons are devoted to the period of preparation. Then we consider his story: his birth, his work, his death, and his resurrection. With each lesson we ask ourselves the question, "What does this story mean to me?"

January-March, 1952

"The Gospel of the Word"

Next we turn to a single Gospel: the good news according to John. To this writer Jesus Christ is the Person and the Power of God. Thirteen lesson articles will discuss the great themes and concepts of this Gospel.

April-June, 1952

"The Gospel of Power: Paul's Letter to the Romans"

Adult classes will explore one of the outstanding theological works of all time for these three months. The study will not be abstract, however. It will concentrate on the relevance of Romans to our times.

* * * * *

Teachers of these lessons will find indispensable guidance for their teaching in the magazine Westminster Teacher.

used of the synagogue attendant who had charge of the Scriptures, is intended to convey the idea that Mark was in charge of or even in the process of preparing Christian Scriptures!

However this may be, the fact remains that the Gospels were written in the first instance as evangelistic tracts. They constitute a unique group among the world's literary forms as to both what they had to say and how they said it. For they represent the first known attempt to persuade and convert *through the simple presentation of a narrative.* They are thumb-nail portraits—vivid, persuasive, consistent in their purpose to present Christ as he was when he walked among men. The centuries have not tarnished their illumination. For through them in every age men have found that they could "see Jesus" as he was and always will be—man's faithful Friend and Lord and Redeemer.

As we ponder the message of the written Gospels in future lessons this quarter, let us approach them, then, not so much as mere records of certain historical facts, though this they are. But let us remember that they are far more than just records. They represent the attempt—and a most successful one, judging by its fruits—to present Christ in a way to call forth faith in him. If we approach the problem of our Lord's Person and work from the viewpoint of experience of him, and not from the view of speculative thought, they will allow the facts to speak for themselves in the hope that these will convict and convert.

2

THE NATION PREPARED FOR HIS COMING

Read *Acts 6: 8 to 7: 60; Gal. 3: 6-29*

As students of the life of Christ we are naturally impatient to get right into his story. But if we are going to understand that story correctly, we must spend some time on the way God prepared a nation for his coming. Christ did not appear suddenly among men who did not expect him, but, on the contrary, to a nation that had been looking for him for many centuries and that had never given up hope, though time moved slowly and with lumbering step.

To see Jesus Christ in proper perspective, then, we must consider, in the next four weeks, four things:

(1) *the way God called and trained the Jewish people to be the nation from which Christ would come;*
(2) *the hope of this people for a Messiah;*
(3) *the devotion of Israel to its law;*
(4) *the announcement by John the Baptist that the dream was fulfilled and the Lord, with his Kingdom, was at hand.*

THERE is an unusual golden thread that binds together the long history of the Jewish people. It is the audacious claim that from the beginning of time God chose the Hebrew nation to be his own special people and that through them he would fulfill his purpose for the redeeming of all mankind. They were not always faithful to such a bold destiny. The time came when they forgot the ultimate purpose for the salvation of the whole world and became content to believe that it had only their own well-being in view. But of the divine choice itself they never lost sight; and in one form or another Judaism has held firmly, even to the present day, to its conviction of being in a special sense God's "chosen people."

Where did they get this idea? They were taught it over the centuries by a long series of remarkable men, the so-called *prophets* of Israel and Judah. These men were to the Hebrew people and their period in history what the "philosopher" was to Greece, the "rishi" was to India, and the "scientist" is to our Western world today. And the influence of their personality traits and the nature of their teachings made as indelible an impression on both people and period as have these other teachers and leaders on their respective worlds.

The prophet was a man who claimed that he had both a *message* directly from God for mankind and a *commission* to proclaim it. Isaiah's "call," as narrated in the sixth chapter of his prophecy, is characteristic in these two respects of every prophet. Micaiah ben Imlah spoke for all prophets worthy of the name when he said to Kings Ahab and Jehoshaphat; "As Jehovah liveth, what Jehovah saith unto me, that will I speak" (*I Kings 22: 14*). The prophet, then, was under the deep conviction that his message was from God alone. And it must be spoken! No doubt all these men would have agreed with Jeremiah's strange utterance: "And if I say, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name, then there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with forbearing, and I cannot contain" (*Jer. 20: 9*).

These men clothed their message in various literary forms: in psalms or hymns, poems, parables, and sermons. But they were historians as well, and that of no mean stature. From the day of Amos in the middle of the eighth century before Christ, or even earlier, they undertook to write up the history of God's "chosen people" in a unique way. Instead of merely recording long series of events as these transpired, they chose certain ones from among those known to them, and then they made it a point to

What to Look For in This Lesson

1. What is the Hebrews' "philosophy of history"?

2. What does Paul mean when he says, in *Gal. 3: 8*, that Abraham had "the gospel" preached to him?

3. Read Stephen's sermon, *Acts 7: 2-53*, and note on a piece of paper what Old Testament events he selects to illustrate the redemptive purpose of God. Then note how each event fitted into this purpose. For example, the call of Abraham made him father of the Hebrew nation; Joseph in Egypt saved the nation in time of famine.

4. Why did Israel fail to fulfill its destiny?

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dicate in their narration how God had been present these selected events. We should say today that the ophets were actually "philosophers of history" hose special art consisted in the ability to look at story as God looks at it and to show the meaning and urpose that it has in his sight.

Indeed, the prophets would say they had no choice the matter! They would tell us of the divine compulsion that moved them to do as they did. They ould view history in no other way than from the andpoint of God's working in it. Like the poet ennyson, they saw "one increasing purpose" running through history's warp and woof like a golden hread. That purpose was, they held, a redemptive ne. So to them history was nothing but "the story f God's redemptive activity on man's behalf." And iblical history was to their mind nothing more nor ss than his special redemptive activity on behalf of is "chosen people" and through them for mankind at rge. Such a view of history stands out in the entire ld Testament, but particularly in the prophecies of mos and Micah, and in such historical works as the ooks of Kings and Chronicles, which were written y prophets or their disciples.

How God Acted to Redeem His People

In the New Testament we find the same kind of prophetic" view of God's work in Hebrew history. wo passages in particular will illustrate this. The rst of these is Stephen's speech before the Jewish anhedrin (*Acts 7: 2-53*); the second is the argument f the apostle Paul to the churches of Galatia (*Gal. : 6-29*).

Note first that both passages selected begin with Abraham and God's "call" of this patriarch. He was alled (and rightly) a "prophet" in *Gen. 20: 7*, and it s this fact which both Stephen and Paul stress. God poke to him, "called" him, and gave him a commission not only for his own descendants but also for all the families of the earth" (*ch. 12: 3*). Paul even goes so far as to say that Abraham had "the gospel" preached to him (*Gal. 3: 8*). In other words, the revelation that came to Abraham had a purpose—the purpose of man's salvation. Here begins the story of the redemption of the world through the mission of God's own people. Through God's "call" Abraham became the "father of the faithful," the head of a chosen people; and God's universal saving purpose in making this choice was made clear to Abraham at the start.

In reasoning with the Galatians, Paul at a single bound spans the historical gap from Abraham to Christ. "Christ hath redeemed us, . . ." Paul remarks, "that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Christ Jesus" (*vs. 13, 14*); and so he continues: "Ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (*vs. 28, 29*). The salvation of all men was implied in the call of Abraham. Now it has been realized through the saving work of Jesus. For Paul the "golden thread" of God's saving purpose runs from Abraham through history to Christ. Everything in between must be understood in the light of that purpose to which the two events at either end testify. Specifically, he remarks that the "law," of which the Jews made so much, must be evaluated and interpreted in the light of this inclusive purpose. (*Vs. 17-24.*) History, then, for Paul, and more especially Biblical history, is the story of redemption. Rightly understood, it is the story of how God from all eternity has purposed to save men and of how he is doing just that right now in our history today.

Stephen's speech is somewhat more elaborate in outline than Paul's words. He chooses several incidents between Abraham and Jesus to illustrate his prophetic point. Particularly he lays emphasis on God's dealings with his people outside the Promised Land and upon their "sojourn in a strange land" (*Acts 7: 6*), where they lived and suffered and died (*vs. 9-19*). From this he passes to God's "call" of Moses, a second prophet after Abraham, to whom God spoke while he sojourned in the foreign land of Midian (*vs. 29-35*), and through whom God led his people out of Egypt (*vs. 36-43*). Very rapidly he sketches how the people made two houses for God—the Tabernacle in the wilderness (*v. 44*), and the Temple that Solomon built (*v. 47*). But Stephen makes it clear that not through these was God's purpose for men to be fulfilled, nor did God need such houses to dwell in. (*Vs. 48-50.*) Rather, it was through God's talking with men by the prophets (*v. 52*), and particularly through the raising up of "a prophet" like unto Moses (*v. 37*), the "Righteous One" (*v. 52*), that his holy purpose to redeem was to be achieved.

Both Stephen and Paul preach the same message. God told men of his plan for their salvation first through the prophets and finally through fulfilling the plan in his Son. Our main interest in these ser-

mons now is to observe how God's word of revelation first called forth his people to their destiny, then how it led them at every stage of their history to be prepared for their great vocation of saving all the peoples of the earth. Israel was to be, not merely a *saved* community, but a *saving* one, a redemptive agency for the salvation of the world.

But Israel Failed

But Israel refused to redeem. The history of the chosen people shows only too plainly that Stephen was right when he remarked, "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit" (*v. 51*). When our Lord appeared in their midst, the Jews were, by and large, a self-satisfied community, living a sort of insular life in a great sea of Roman paganism. Indeed, they had been like this for several centuries.

Now, there was some historical justification for this state of affairs. After all, the Jewish people was a small one, surrounded by great powers on every side—Greece, then Rome on the north and west; Babylon, then Persia on the east; and Egypt forever to the south. It is greatly to the credit of this little people that it was able to hold onto its ancestral faith at all, through many generations. Then, too, some of the Jews had enjoyed missionary activity in behalf of their faith, although Jesus speaks disparagingly of their zeal (*Matt. 23: 15*). But the Pharisees were prepared to receive converts to Judaism only on conditions that confined the faith within the bounds of a national culture. Such requirements were far removed from the high ethical and spiritual aims of the Hebrew prophets, who could brook no narrow cultural limitations for true religion.

Moreover, the history of Israel and Judah, as Stephen says, shows that this people was quite unwilling to hearken to God's voice as it came through his servants, the prophets. "Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute?" (*Acts 7: 52.*) This was because this people, by and large, could not abide the severe call to righteousness and unselfish living that God desired it to follow. These prophets were called God's "watchmen," and it is a notable fact that no group of people wishes to have "watchmen" set over them.

Therefore when the Righteous One, the Lord of Life and of Light, came into their midst, the Jewish people were unprepared in heart and mind to receive him (*V. 52.*) He had been sent to people who had received a course of training, calculated to make them his followers in a great task—God's redemptive purpose for all men. But when he came, he found them unprepared for that task. Rather, they were "stiffnecked," "uncircumcised in heart and ears." They were like the people of Isaiah's time, of whom that prophet had written:

> "For this people's heart is waxed gross,
> And their ears are dull of hearing,
> And their eyes they have closed." (*Acts 28: 27.*)

Jesus himself quoted this saying as applicable to the Jewish people of his day. The "chosen people"—chosen to be God's saving instrument in the world—could not be that instrument, because they had not really experienced salvation. *For a man is not saved until he himself becomes a saving force!*

With Christ, therefore, God turned to the Gentiles. It was not that he had rejected his people. They had rejected God and had refused to follow out his will for them. It had been thus throughout their history. Swift punishment always followed upon their disobedience: captivity in Egypt was followed by captivity in Babylon, and this again by subjection successively to Persia, Greece, and Rome. The prophets had seen in these trials the hand of God disciplining his people so that they might be saved and save others. But in rejecting Christ they lost their birthright. It was given to another.

3

THE HOPE OF THE NATION

Read *Isa. 6: 1-7; 10: 20-23; 11: 1-11; 53.*

Last week we looked at Hebrew history with some of the same broad view of the picture that a person receives of a landscape from an airplane. With Paul, we saw history from Abraham to Christ in a single preview; in a glance we saw the mountains, the roads, the rivers, and the valleys. This week, however, we want to go back over some of the terrain we scanned so hurriedly before. We want to pause at some of the great ideas and consider their meaning and their grandeur.

Israel saw history as the theater of God's redemptive work. *But who is God? Who is this Jesus Christ whom he sent? And how was Israel to be the instrument of man's redemption?* Some preliminary consideration of these matters is our concern today.

The God of the Nation

The God of the Hebrew prophets was not only the Creator of the universe; he was also man's Father and King. Most of the higher religions have taught that God created all his universe and was therefore its Father, the One who brought it into being. But

ISAIAH, BY GUY ROWE

remained for the Hebrew prophets to give the ideas f Creator and Father moral character. They pointed ut that only an immoral god would create a universe ith no feeling of moral responsibility to care for it hereafter; therefore, they used the metaphors of King" and "Father" to describe the moral God they new. As "King" he has sovereign right to impose his ill; as "Father" he bestows his protecting care. Both ogether indicate that God never for a moment forgets he man whom he has made or man's highest needs.

The beautiful vision of Isaiah, given in *Isa. 6: 1-7*, xpresses this teaching of God's sovereignty over man. We see a throne with the attendant features of the nveloping "train," the high heavenly beings and heir majestic song, the shaking of the very founda- ions of the Temple, and the smoke filling it. These re intended to create the feeling of God's awesome majesty and his dominating presence. At the same ime, the words of the hymn in *v. 3* and the effect of he whole scene upon the prophet convey the sense of God's worthiness to rule over the affairs of men.

God is worthy to rule mankind because of his *holi- ness*. This word means "separateness." It emphasizes he distance of God from his creatures, lest anyone e tempted to confuse him with man or to try to repre- sent his likeness in human form, as in the pagan world. According to Scripture, God, instead of being likened o any creature that he has made, is himself the standard to which all else is to be compared. Man, the highest of God's creatures, can aspire to be like him. (*Gen. 1: 26.*) But even man is never to be confused with God. This is part of the meaning of the sera- phim's song in the prophet's vision. "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts" signifies that man is always to be conscious of the vast difference between himself and God.

The young Isaiah, however, went farther in his vision. He is conscious of the yawning gap between his nature and God's nature; but he is also aware that the difference between man and God is a difference in moral character. The vision of God's worth makes him aware of his own unworthiness; God's purity convicts Isaiah of his own impurity.

Isaiah's vision of what God is teaches us two things about man: First, since God is holy, man ought to be holy too. Long before Isaiah's time, a writer put it this way: "Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy" (*Lev. 19: 2*). And secondly, because God is morally perfect, he has the right to rule over man. We acknowledge him as king because he himself convicts us of our uncleanness and makes us acknowledge his greatness and his purity.

God Among Men

But who can ever be like this God and still live among men? Again Isaiah directs our sight. In *Isa. 11: 1-5* he describes One who fulfills the requirements of being God's likeness among men. He is to arise from their midst—"out of the stock of Jesse"; that is, he is to be a Jew descended from King David. But it will not be this heritage which will make him worthy of ruling in God's name so much as the fact that he will have God's Spirit resting upon him. From this Spirit he will receive certain characteristics: he will have "wisdom and understanding" (intellectual char- acteristics); he will practice practical "counsel and might" (practical considerations), and he will live in religious "knowledge and . . . fear of the Lord" (re- ligious qualities). Taken together, these gifts say that this great Figure drawn from among men will perfectly reflect the very nature of God himself. The further description of the "righteous acts" of this great Figure in the succeeding verses give vivid and dramatic effect to the same idea.

Who is this scion of Jesse, this Spirit-endowed Per- son? The Jews called him their "Messiah," the One whom God would send to rule and lead his chosen people. They portrayed him in many ways. One of the most familiar portraits is found in *Isa. 9: 6*, where he is called "Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Ever- lasting Father, Prince of Peace." In these two passages Israel expresses its hope that one day there would arise from among men One who would wholly fulfill God's purpose that man should exactly reflect his own moral image. Such a One would indeed be the Person through whom God's Kingdom would be established among men.

A later prophet added to Isaiah's pictures of the Messiah. His contribution to the portrait was to sug-

What to Look For in This Lesson

1. What does Isaiah contribute to our knowledge of God?
2. According to Isaiah's prophecy, what (*a*) intellectual characteristics, (*b*) practical considerations, and (*c*) religious qualities was the Messiah to have?
3. What is the prophet's doctrine of the "remnant" as "suffering servant"?
4. How are the two conceptions of individual servant (Christ) and serving nation to be linked?

gest that the Messiah would be a "suffering servant" among men. This Sufferer would show, in his own body, the forgiving, self-sacrificing, vicarious, and redeeming love of God for his people. The prophet's description of this person reaches its pinnacle in *ch. 53*.

In this word picture the Sufferer is shown as One who arises from among our common humanity, sharing its sorrows, its obscurity, and its seeming lack of any impressive or commendable characteristics. (*Vs. 1-3.*) Again, he is One who suffers for others, taking upon himself their failures and weaknesses, and accepting the punishment that they merit for their iniquities. (*Vs. 4-6.*) In consequence of his purpose to assume the burdens and guilt of others, he cannot say anything in his own defense, and he is allowed to pass from the scene into a nameless oblivion, without vindication before his fellow men. (*Vs. 7-9.*) And yet this Sufferer is vindicated in the end, for the end is with God, in whose name he lived and suffered and died; it was God whom he served and whose will he did; and so his work of redemption will bear fruit unto the salvation of all his followers. (*Vs. 10-12.*)

Now, there is a remarkable feature about this Suffering Servant of the prophecy that we dare not miss, for it forms the link between two aspects of the gospel as preached by the prophets. The Servant is both *an individual and a group*. In *ch. 53* the Servant appears as an individual who in a paramount sense fulfills the ideal of God's true man, doing his bidding in every aspect of human life. But there are many other passages in this prophecy where the Servant is *the people as a whole*. For example, in *ch. 41: 8* we read, "But thou, Israel, my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend . . ."; in *ch. 44: 1*, "Yet now hear, O Jacob my servant, and Israel, whom I have chosen . . ."; and in *ch. 49: 1-7* it is as a nation, God's people, that the Servant becomes "a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth."

The People of God

One final aspect of Israel's hope and sense of destiny claims our attention in this lesson. It grows out of the prophet's vision that the redeeming Sufferer would be not only an individual servant but also a serving nation. Again and again God re-created his people, despite their "backsliding" and turning away from him to serve the gods of the surrounding nations. So the prophet saw a divine purpose behind this re-creation.

Out of this bitter struggle between the true and living God and the false gods of the day there emerged the prophet's doctrine of the "remnant." God punished his people, who had forsaken him, with captivity, with the loss of nationhood, and with his permission to reap the fruits of their own defection from him, their rightful Sovereign. But he never entirely gave up his struggle with them. His willingness to forgive them and to receive them back to his embrace was clear to his prophets. But experience and the word that came to them convinced the prophets that the chosen people would never be saved as a unit. Far too many had gone willfully after other gods to imagine that the people as a whole would remain true to God or even finally return to him.

It was equally clear, however, that there was always a nucleus true to the God of the fathers. This had been demonstrated by Elijah in his conflict with the Baal worshipers among his countrymen. On that occasion Elijah uttered the ultimatum: "How long go ye limping between the two sides? if the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him" (*I Kings 18: 21*). It was in that time of stress and indecision that God himself revealed to the prophet that he still had a faithful following left. (*Ch. 19: 18.*) And it was, no doubt, out of just such experiences as this that the doctrine of the remnant was born.

Isaiah 10: 20-23 indicates clearly how this remnant was to be constituted. To quote *v. 21*, "A remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God." That is to say, the remnant after the Captivity is not to be made up of those who return as released prisoners of war to their homeland. Rather, it is the group who, in so returning, come back consciously and purposely to serve the God of their fathers. The remnant is the people who return to God, choosing him as the Sovereign over their lives. It would be fair to say, then, that in the doctrine of the "remnant" the idea of a chosen people reaches its highest moral development. For in the beginning it was God who did the choosing of a people to become the redemptive agency of mankind at large. But in the end it is individuals who, by choosing God as Sovereign over their lives, form the nucleus of a new people of God.

We can see now how moral responsibility, commitment to being God's people, is the choice these Israelites must make. The doctrines of the "remnant" and of the "suffering servant" are, in the end, one and the same doctrine. For a selective group of people must choose to suffer in behalf of all the people if the nation's calling is to be fulfilled. Furthermore, we may see the linking of these two doctrines in the New Testament, where Christ, the Suffering Servant, and the Church, his Body, are both called to be the means by which God may serve and save all mankind.

THE RELIGION OF THE LAW

Read *Neh. 8: 1-8; 10: 28-39; Mark 7: 1-15.*

God's relation with man is a two-way affair. Who ever heard of a conversation between two people which one person did all the talking? If God has something to say to man, he has every right to expect man to answer, to make some sort of response. Now, true "religion" is that response. There are, no doubt, religions that do not spring from any direct contact with God at all. But the Scripture clearly teaches that in any genuine conversation between God and man, after God has spoken, man replies to his word. He may reply in obedience, he may reply in rebellion, but he replies! And it is God who has spoken first. In any true "experience" of God that man has, he finds that God arrived on the scene before him, prepared the way for his coming, and was first to speak in the new situation. True religion, then, is man's earnest endeavor in the circumstances of his day to hear God speak in his Word and to make the response that God requires of him.

Jewish Religion Before Christ

Israel's religion was this nation's "reply" to God and his Word. In our lesson this week we want to consider how Israel "replied" in the period between the Exile and the Advent of our Lord. This period saw great changes in the state of religion among the Jews, not the least being a new place and way to worship God. The Exile had robbed them of the Temple and its worship of sacrificial offerings. Accordingly, in a strange land, back on their own resources to make a response to God's Word that should seem to be agreeable to his will, they developed a new house of worship that would later take its place alongside the Temple. This was the *synagogue*. The word is a Greek term for any sort of *gathering* or *assembly*. Accordingly, it was well adapted to describe a congregation meeting together without any house of worship whatsoever. Probably the Israelites often assembled "by the rivers of Babylon" in just this fashion and wept as they "remembered Zion," with its Temple and highly developed worship service. (*Ps. 137: 1.*) And when they returned to the homeland, they brought their new synagogue with them. It by no means displaced the Temple, which remained as the great house of sacrifice, but the synagogue as a place of both instruction for young and old alike and as a convenient center for corporate worship soon spread all over the land and in later centuries throughout the Greek and Roman worlds. Perhaps the reference to the destruction of "all the synagogues of God in the land" in *Ps. 74: 8* should be taken as evidence of the early distribution of these new worship places far and wide on Jewish soil.

Two great books were produced to assist in the worship of both Temple and synagogue in this new day of Jewish history. One of these—the book of The Psalms—was to serve as the hymnal of both these institutions. The other was the Jewish Prayer Book. Though never incorporated into the Scripture, down to our own day this book has given the synagogue worship service its form and even constitutes a source of all later worship manuals, Protestant and Catholic.

The Scriptures of the Old Testament also reached their final form in this period, and the *cqnon* (the list of books that the Old Testament should contain) was closed. These were the books of the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings—all the Old Testament literature, in the form in which it has come down to us. But in addition to the written Scriptures, an oral teaching composing "the tradition of the elders" * (referred to in *Mark 7: 3*) was in process of formation in the period after the Exile. This oral tradition was of two kinds: *haggada,* or teaching of a devotional and inspirational kind, dwelling on the more spiritual aspects of the prophetic message; and *halakah,* or interpretations of the ethical and ritual portions of the law of Moses. Since these ethical sections of the oral tradition came to dominate Israel's life in the period of history just before the coming of Christ, we need to look at them more closely.

Living by Rules

The two passages from The Book of Nehemiah that we have chosen as background Scripture for this article tell how after the return from Captivity the Jews promised to observe the law. The leader of the movement that was to make the law of Moses the center and circumference of the life of the Jew was Ezra, "the priest the scribe" (*Neh. 8: 9*). Jewish tradition has nominated him also as the first of a line of *scribes,* whose function was the interpretation of the Mosaic law, with a view to adapting it to life situations. These scribes made much of "the tradition of the elders," and long before Jesus' day they had found a group (the Pharisees) ready to serve as their disciples.

It is well known that in our Lord's time the chief point of controversy between the Sadducees (high-priestly families) and these same Pharisees was as to *the central authority* in all matters of custom and religion. The Sadducees held that the Old Testament Scriptures alone were to be the guide, whereas the Pharisees with great zeal insisted that the oral traditions developed after Ezra's time were of equal authority with the written word.

The viewpoint of the Pharisees is intelligible, how-

What to Look For in This Lesson

1. What is true religion?
2. What were the main characteristics of Jewish religion before Christ?
3. What was the cause of the rivalry between Sadducees and Pharisees?
4. What is wrong with a system that sets up rules for every man to observe from the time he gets up in the morning until he goes to bed at night? What did Christ say on the subject?

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ever unworthy it may appear. They held that Moses had given 613 specific commandments to Israel. Ezra read them to the people (*Neh. 8: 1-8*), and the Jews of his day promised to observe them with care. But, unfortunately, not even these 613 commands could cover every conceivable situation that might arise in life. For as life changes from nomadic to pastoral, from agricultural to industrial, or again from village to urban existence, many laws are bound to prove obsolete, and new situations will arise for which no old command will serve.

Accordingly, the scribes and the Pharisees, that is, the great teachers and interpreters of the law followed by this group, undertook to bring the law up to date. This they did by putting forward thousands of new commandments ("the tradition of the elders" *) to meet every conceivable new circumstance. It was their claim that these new ordinances were in line with the spirit of the old law and served merely to apply it under strange conditions that had not been foreseen when it was given by Moses. Indeed, in one passage of the law as edited late in Hebrew history, it is boldly asserted that these oral traditions were handed down by word of mouth from Moses himself and that they were of equal validity in consequence with the written law! Perhaps our Lord refers to some such claim in his controversy with the Pharisees in *Mark 7: 8*.

The scribes had some justification for their position. The Fourth Commandment had said, "Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is a sabbath unto the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work . . ." (*Ex. 20: 9, 10*). But what is *work?* Obviously, if the command is to be taken strictly, it may be argued that one must lie abed all day on the Sabbath! For is it not work to throw one's legs over the side of the bed and get up? If one, then, is to live his life according to this law, it needs to be further defined. And this the oral traditions attempted to do. As finally codified in the Mishnah (collection of the oral traditions), work was said to include thirty-nine sorts of activity, such as "sowing . . . reaping . . . threshing, winnowing . . . baking, shearing wool . . . weaving . . . building . . . lighting a fire," etc. Moreover, each of these requires further clarification, such as that "reaping" meant breaking off the ear of grain, and "threshing" rubbing the whole ear between the hands, whereas feeding an animal meant giving it a whole mouthful at once. Anything less than these *complete* operations was not considered work and not therefore an infringement of the law.

The scribes even went far beyond this. Having begun with the premise that life is to be lived according to an inflexible code, they could discover no end to the application of this principle. They therefore framed a series of traditional rules, calculated to set a pattern for every man to observe from the time he arose in the morning until he went to bed at night. Rules for prayer and the recital of the Shema, or creed, for blessings at meals, for the washing of pots and pans and the keeping of food overnight, for marital relations and the mingling of the sexes, for the life of women and their needs, and for the marriage and divorce of women—indeed, for every conceivable situation and need—all of these were thought out and handed down from one generation to another, with meticulous care for details.

Indeed, once the principle had been accepted that the life of every man must follow a specific conduct pattern to be defined by rule, there could be no end to the matter. Herein lay the weakness of the whole position; for, as Jesus pointed out on more than one occasion, it is not *conduct* but the cultivation of an inner *spirit*, or attitude, from which conduct springs that matters.

Ceremony for Its Own Sake

It was inevitable that in the end institutional religion and religious institutions should become more important than the very people they were intended to serve. Jesus points this out in *Mark 7: 1-15*, in connection with the washing of hands. In origin, no doubt ritual cleansing of the hands before meals had a sanitary purpose. But with the passage of time and the laying of stress upon the washing itself, its original purpose was lost to view. Ceremonial religion, then, attained a value for its own sake, and its value as man's servant and the value of man himself were forgotten.

Another way of saying the same thing would be that for the Pharisee the religious obligation had come to overshadow the ethical. Man's duty to God completely eclipsed man's duty to man. This is the meaning of the further example that our Lord adduces on this occasion from a son's unfilial treatment of his parents (*vs. 9-13*). "Corban" was a scribal term in the Hebrew, meaning "given to God" and Jesus' point is that the scribes have ruled that if a son devoted anything to God as a religious duty, he could thereby escape the moral obligation to his parents. This is by no means the only passage in which our Lord seeks to stress the fact that God desires no love for himself that does not include love for one's neighbor (see *Matt. 5: 23, 24; Mark 12: 29-31*), and that the institutions of man are not comparable in worth to the men they serve (see *Luke 11: 42-44*).

The cause of the scribes' serious blunder in this gard is not far to seek. It was due to the fact that ey began their study of God's revelation of his will r man from a totally wrong point of view. Instead seeking to enter into the spirit of his commands rough fellowship with his living Spirit, they looked on these in piecemeal fashion as so many separate ders. These they considered not for their moral or iritual worth, but simply as so many commands ven from heaven. They did not differentiate between em as of greater or lesser importance in themselves, t considered that each separate command must be served for no other reason than that it was a command of God. This sort of attitude is termed "legalm." From the legalistic view there was no criterion which God's servant could decide that one command of God was of more value or more imperative an any other!

From time to time the scribes themselves had glimerings of a better way. In the scribal book known as the *Talmud* (completed during fifth or sixth century of the Christian Era), there is a catalogue of seven kinds of Pharisees, and the remark is made that of these but one is acceptable to God, the one who, like Abraham, is his *friend!* Such self-criticism shows some genuine spiritual and moral insight, even at a time when legalism was otherwise rampant. Moreover, the oral traditions contained the view that it was of no use for God to give specific commands to a man who had not first dedicated his whole life and being to him.

This thought was derived from the fact that in the Shema, or creed, beginning with *Deut. 6: 4-9,* it was first said that one should love God with all one's being, and only thereafter were specific commands given. Had such a view dominated the scribes' thinking generally, they would no doubt have followed more closely the teachings of the Hebrew prophets before them, who had tried to inculcate a spirit, rather than to lay down laws (*Jer. 31: 31-34*).

5

JOHN: PROPHET AMONG SCRIBES

ead *Luke 3: 1-20.* Supplementary Reading: *Jer. 31: 31-34; Ezek. 36: 22-31.*

WE HAVE seen how, during the period dominated by the scribes, the voice of the ancient prophets d been stilled. For some hundreds of years, while e Greek and Roman powers and influence were paraount in the Holy Land, no prophet is known to have ourished among the Jews: God did not speak "mouth mouth, even manifestly," to any of his chosen peole. The scribes themselves are witnesses to this fact. hey said, "When the last prophets, Haggai, Zechaah, and Malachi, died, the Holy Spirit ceased out of srael." Very occasionally the scribes claimed that they eard an *echo* of the voice of God, moaning like a ove; but this was neither very satisfying nor helpful. did not make scribes into prophets.

Then one day, to the astonishment of everyone, here appeared down by the Jordan River a rudely lad figure upon whom the mantle of the old prophets ppeared to have fallen. John, the son of a priest, came mong men as a "voice . . . crying in the wilderness." he description was apt, literally and figuratively. he world into which he came was a veritable wilderess estranged from God, and the highest honor that ould be paid him was to say that God had made him "voice" through which to speak to his people. With his claim John was identified as a part of the ancient rophetic tradition that had seemed to pass away from srael. In this lies his chief significance: he was the nk between the great Old Testament prophets and he greatest of the prophets, Jesus Christ himself.

A Religion of Spirit

John's prophetic message created such a stir that "the multitudes went out to be baptized by him." * "The people were in expectation" * of something new and significant happening, and "all men questioned in their hearts concerning John." * Yet, why were the people so startled? Was not all this to have been anticipated? Let us return to the message of those older prophets and see. Someone has said that the faith of ancient Israel is unique in being the only one known that prophesied it would someday be replaced by another and a still greater faith. Herein lies its chief glory.

Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel prophesy that a new covenant will replace the old: It will be one written in the "inward parts," in the "hearts" (*Jer. 31: 31-34*); sprinkling, cleansing, "a new heart," "a new spirit"—these will take the place of "the stony heart" and the "filthiness" of the past (*Ezek. 36: 22-31*).

A "new covenant" between God and his people was needed because the people had continually disobeyed and broken the old one, said Jeremiah. In our lessons we have seen how Israel rejected God's prophets; we know Jeremiah was right. For time and time again, Israel refused to submit itself to God's discipline and to have a part in his redemptive purpose. "Stiffnecked" is the adjective fittingly applied to them on numerous occasions. (*II Chron. 30: 8.*) "Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute?" * asks the first Christian martyr of the people of his day. (*Acts 7: 52.*) And our Lord, in the same vein, exclaimed, "Woe unto you!

What to Look For in This Lesson

1. Why was there such need for a "new covenant" between God and his people when John the Baptist started his ministry?
2. What were John's main contributions as a prophet?
3. Summarize the background of events leading up to Christ.

for ye build the tombs of the prophets, and your fathers killed them." (*Luke 11: 47.*)

Clearly, what this people needed was not more rules, but a "new spirit" to keep the will of God already revealed to them. Hence, the new thing that God would bring to his people was of a spiritual order. It would be nothing less than a new religion—a religion not of law but of spirit. "And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep mine ordinances, and do them," said God through Ezekiel. "And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord," was the way the message came through Jeremiah. What marvelous insight it took for these ancient prophets to foresee a day of such enlightenment, surrounded as they were by nothing but moral degeneracy and darkness!

John Comes in This Tradition

Now when we turn to the ministry of John, the wilderness voice, it is startling to see how clearly he takes up the theme at the point where Jeremiah and Ezekiel had laid it down. For, through Jeremiah, God had declared, "I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more"; and similarly, through Ezekiel, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness . . . will I cleanse you." And now John appears, "preaching the baptism of repentance unto remission of sins" (*Luke 3: 3*).

John was definitely no scribe. He did not know much about finding a rule or law to fit a contemporary problem. It is interesting to see what short shrift he makes of such things. On the occasion described in our Scripture passage (*Luke 3: 1-20*), men asked him *what one group and another must do* in order to fulfill God's will for them. John answered with commonplace counsel: Share your food and clothing, be content with your wages, do not practice extortion! There was nothing new in any of these replies; it took no profound student of ethics to be able to give them! The contemporary scribes, as their collected sayings show, could give far more illuminating guidance than this.

No, John was no scribe; he was a prophet, a "voice"; and his voice was the Voice of God speaking through God's man. One or two things only he saw, but he saw these with great clarity. The sin of his people, their need of repentance and of turning to God anew for forgiveness, the assurance that God would send a "mightier one" to baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire—such were the things that John had come to preach and to proclaim.

Now there was nothing new or startling in most of what John had to say. His was the old theme upon which the prophets had composed their symphonic thunderings since the days of Amos—sin, repentance, forgiveness, "the wrath to come," the Holy Spirit, fire, judgment, salvation. *But there was one new note* that John could utter. No doubt this was the word which startled his hearers into rapt attention: "There cometh he that is mightier than I, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit and in fire."

JOHN THE BAPTIST PREACHES REPENTANCE

This was news indeed! And it set loose a flow of memories, an excited hope of anticipation, in his hearers. For the ancient prophets had spoken of "the great and terrible day" when God himself would come to judge and to save. And the people listening to John would remember the numerous descriptive titles by which these prophets had spoken of the Messiah who would reign as God's Viceroy among his people: "a branch," "a shoot out of the stock of Jesse," "the ruler from Bethlehem-Ephratah," the Child whose name would be "Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." According to one prophet, Elijah himself was to come to prepare men's hearts for the day of the Lord. (*Mal. 4: 5, 6.*) Was John's "mightier one" to be identified with any of these? So the people asked him; and although John did not satisfy their curiosity about the details of the Messiah's coming, he did accurately describe what the "mightier one" would be and do.

This "one" would in some mysterious way be identified with the Lord himself. He would come as Judge, with a winnowing fan in hand, dividing therewith the wheat from the chaff. And as a judge's duty often in-

volves the condemnation of the offender, so this One would burn up the chaff "with unquenchable fire." John, like some of the earlier prophets, made much of this judging aspect of the final drama. He spoke of the "wrath to come," of the "axe lying at the root of the trees," and always of the "fire" of cleansing and judgment.

But John did not forget the saving aspect of God's final activity through the "mightier one." In fact, this was the ultimate message of the Baptist, as of all the prophets before him. God desires not the death of a sinner but rather that he should turn unto God and live. The message of the wrath of God is always to sound a warning to those who are neglecting God's tender entreaties. And so it was in John's message. The symbol of his ministry was the cleansing water of baptism "unto remission of sins." It was this to which he called his auditors, and as they came to his baptism, he held out the promise of a mightier than he, who would rebaptize them—this time with the Holy Spirit.

There is a finality about this gift of the Holy Spirit that ought not to escape us, even as the promise of it must have greatly impressed John's hearers. What greater gift can God give to men than this gift of himself? And what "mightier one" can we conceive to act as his messenger than that One to whom such a gift is entrusted? Here was the fulfillment of the promise of the "new covenant" and of the "new heart." For Ezekiel had said, "And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep mine ordinances, and do them." Moreover, it was the promise that had been given to the Suffering Servant: "I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring" (*Isa. 44: 3*). It was to be God's final gift to men in the latter days; as Joel had said, "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions" (*Joel 2: 28*). God had spoken through his prophets.

And so we come to the threshold of the great event itself. The day of his coming has been fully proclaimed. We have reviewed the preparation for the same in God's "call" of men and women to serve as his mouthpieces to declare his will for the salvation of mankind; we have seen something of *their* gospel message, of its increasing clarity and deep spiritual teaching; we have watched them strive with the chosen people to become its evangelists to the world at large; we have observed how that people turned away from their great opportunity and became satisfied with their cult religion and its perpetuation for themselves; finally, we have heard the "forerunner" calling Israel to repentance as he proclaimed the "mightier one," who should bring in the religion of Spirit. Now we turn to Him.

6

"THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST WAS ON THIS WISE . . ."

Read *Luke 1: 26-38; 2: 22-35; Matt. 2: 1-12.*

THE Christian Church has "a story to tell to the nations." Jesus' story is no speculation brilliantly conceived by the mind of man. It is glad, "good tidings"—a gospel or *good spell,* to use the phrase of our Anglo-Saxon fathers. It is the story of how God came down to earth and lived among men in order to save them. It is an account of actual historical happenings —just as real and historically valid as any other event in history. To be sure, the story has its main significance in the realms of faith and obedience, but his story is history.

This fact, that Christ is a "historical Jesus," is one of the distinctive features of our Biblical faith. The writer and a colleague many years ago in North India were challenged to a debate in an Arya Somaj temple on the subject, "Was Jesus Christ a myth?" Had we in return challenged the pundit to a discussion of the question, "Resolved, That Krishna was a myth," he and his Hindu associates would have laughed at us, for it made no difference to their philosophic religion whether Krishna were myth or historic character. But he knew that it made all the difference in the world to the Christian faith whether or not Jesus was a myth!

The Biblical revelation takes history seriously. It teaches, indeed, that history is the account of what God has done on man's behalf. Accordingly, if these events happened, if God did reveal himself in a series of saving acts to the prophets and through his incarnate Son, then we have a sure foundation for the faith that is in us; but if the reverse be true, then, indeed, as Paul writes to his Corinthian converts, "Our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain" (*I Cor. 15: 14**). To quote the author of Hebrews, "In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son." (*Heb. 1: 1, 2.**) These historic happenings are the very foundation of our faith.

*"The Child . . . Will Be Called Holy, the Son of God"**

The Son of God did not come to earth "unheralded and unsung." We have already seen something of the preparation for the day of his coming in the word that came from time to time through the prophets of

THE NATIVITY

Israel. But as the day drew near, people in numerous walks of life began to sense his nearness. Old Simeon, Anna the prophetess, the Wise Men from the East, local shepherds, the priest Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth, both Joseph and the mother Mary—all of these were made aware in one way and another of his approach. Let us look at the vision through which one of these people, the peasant woman Mary, was made aware of his coming

Gabriel, the messenger sent to Daniel in days gone by (*Dan. 8: 16*), is the interpreter of God's purposes to Mary. The scene is Nazareth, a town in southern Galilee, and the vision comes to a woman who has made an inviolable marriage contract with a certain carpenter—Joseph by name, a descendant of David.

As Luke tells the story (*ch. 1: 26-38*), God had two *choices* to make. First, he had to choose a mother for his Son, and the simplehearted woman, Mary, was his choice (*v. 30*). She had "found favor," said the angel, "with God." * There had been a succession of mothers among the chosen people in days gone by whom God had appointed to be the vehicles of his ongoing purpose of salvation—Rebekah, Rachel, Hannah, and many another. We need not wonder, then, that in bringing his Son into the world he should have been careful about the choice of the one through whom this should be accomplished. There is, however, nothing in Luke's account that would prompt us to worship this simple maid. Her part is rather that of God's servant, ready at all times to accept God's choice of her and his will for her. "Let it be to me according to your word," * she says, even as any true child of God should do under the like circumstance.

The other choice concerns the son who is to be born of the Virgin. He is to be in the line of David. But his greatness does not stem from this fact. Among small, isolated peoples like the Jews at the time, a majority, if not all, of them can trace their lineage back to the great founder of their people. Probably many of the Jews of Jesus' day were of the "house of David." The point of the story, however, lies rather in the choice of this "son of David" to sit upon David's throne. Only Mary's son Jesus is both David's son and "the Son of the Most High," * that is, the Son of God.

Jesus himself made this point during the Last Week, when he said that the great thing about the Christ (i. e., the Messiah) is not that he is David's son but that he is David's Lord. (See *Mark 12: 35-37*.) There were many of David's sons contemporary with Jesus, but this did not qualify them for the Messiahship. He alone of those sons of David was the Messiah, because, unlike those others, he was the eternal Son of God. He alone, therefore, is worthy to be the Messiah of whose "kingdom there should be no end."

One final point in the narrative is to be noted. The Holy Spirit has a function to perform in bringing God's Son into the world. (*V. 35*.) Later, we shall see how intimately that Spirit's power and activity are felt by Jesus throughout his ministry. For the moment we pause only to note how appropriate it is that the Spirit should thus share in the incarnation. The same Spirit who inspired the prophets of old with the word of God, the word of Revelation, is also the agency of God in bringing the incarnate Word (the very pinnacle of God's revelation to man) into the world. Whatever revelation of God there was in the word of the prophets was there through the Spirit. That Jesus is God's perfect revelation is also due to the Spirit's work. "Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God." (*Luke 1: 35.**)

A Hope Realized—Prophetic Interpretations

Another person to whom God revealed that the infant Jesus was his only-begotten Son was the prophet Simeon. (*Luke 2: 22-35*.) Nothing is told us concerning this man's profession or occupation in life, his social standing, his poverty or riches, any position of influence that he may previously have occupied among his people. We know only his name and the deeply spiritual character of his life. Quite evidently, he is intended by Luke to stand as the typical child of God, a sign that God's Holy Spirit is "no respecter of persons" but rather will speak of spiritual matters to anyone prepared to listen. Prophets had been men of every class in society: shepherds, kings, priests, statesmen, commoners, and even nameless folk. To speak for God, a man needs only to listen and to be commissioned by his voice.

The outstanding characteristic of Simeon was his faith; he was "looking for the consolation of Israel" (*v. 25**), and he had so thoroughly committed himself to trusting that God would provide it that he had been rewarded with the assurance that he would live to see the instrument by which Israel's salvation would be accomplished. The same Holy Spirit, therefore, who had brought the birth of Jesus to pass, opened Simeon's

eyes to recognize the Christ of God when he saw him. When, therefore, he refers to the Infant held lovingly in his arms, he speaks with the assurance of any prophet who ever heard God's voice addressing his own spirit.

Moreover, the word that he utters is characterized by the same universal note as that of the prophets of old. This Jesus, he says, is to be true to his name of Saviour and to become the instrument of God's redemption, not alone to Israel, but to the Gentiles as well. (*Vs. 29-32.*) And with real prophetic insight Simeon knows, too, that all will not receive that redemption; Jesus is to be "a sign that is spoken against" (*v. 34*). Possibly he thought of Jesus in terms of the Suffering Servant, for he uses language borrowed from *Isa. 42: 6; 49: 6,* and descriptive there of this great Figure.

The Wise Men

God also opened the eyes of certain foreigners and allowed them to see that Jesus was his Son. The story of the eastern Wise Men (*Matt. 2: 1-12*) adds nothing to what has already been said about the widespread expectation of the Messiah and his universal significance. Essentially, it is a development of the theme of *Isa. 2: 2-4* and of *Micah 4: 1-3.*

"But in the last days it shall come to pass,
That the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be
established in the top of the mountains,
And it shall be exalted above the hills;
And people shall flow unto it.
And many nations shall come, and say,
Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
And to the house of the God of Jacob."
(*Micah 4: 1, 2.*)

God, who spoke through dreams and visions to other spirits and by direct conversation to the prophets, spoke to these pagan astrologers through the stars, the object of their constant study and a medium they understood and recognized. (There are other instances on record of similar Magi coming from the East to inquire of the birth of a world deliverer. Some sixty years later this very thing occurred at the court of Nero.)

We do not know which star these astrologers saw, nor how they concluded that the star referred to was that of the Jewish Messiah. But apparently they had decided that his star was now in the ascendant and that therefore he would soon appear. Jewish lore had long looked for such a heavenly sign for their Messiah (*Num. 24: 17*), and so it is entirely appropriate that this story should be part of the record. Moreover, the offering of gifts and, indeed, the entire story, corresponds with the beautiful, expectant hope of Israel, described in *Isa. 60: 1-6* and beginning thus:

"Arise, shine; for thy light is come,
And the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee."
(*V. 1.*)

What to Look For in This Lesson

1. What historical proof do we have of Jesus' birth?
2. Relate again how God was made incarnate. What should our attitude be toward Mary?
3. In what respects do the Gospel accounts of Christ's birth correspond with the old prophecies?
4. What is the true meaning of Christmas? What is the relation between the incarnation and atonement?

The Message of the Incarnation

What were the writers, Matthew and Luke, attempting to say in their stories of the birth of Jesus? They were trying to make vivid to the common man both the reality and the meaning of the incarnation. God has come down in human guise, identifying himself with man for man's salvation. The eternal Son of God became man through birth of a virgin under the power of God's Spirit. Reconciliation between God and man was effected by One who had the nature of both.

Luke and Matthew, therefore, are professing the same faith as that asserted by John in his doctrine of the "Word." "The Word was God" (*John 1: 1**) and "became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father" (*v. 14**). The writer to the Hebrews means essentially the same thing when, in speaking of the Son, he says, "He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature" (*Heb. 1: 3**). And Paul, in like fashion, says that God has given "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ" (*II Cor. 4: 6**).

For all these writers the incarnation stands for God's entry into human experience in the person of his Son, Jesus Christ. It is not surprising, therefore, that all of them see that event as but the steppingstone to the atonement. God did not adopt human form without an adequate reason. As Paul puts it, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself" (*II Cor. 5: 19**). Similarly, John, in his well-loved verse (*John 3: 16*), says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life." If we will maintain this relation between the incarnation and atonement, we shall see Christmas in the right perspective. It is not an isolated day in the Christian year but a holy festival celebrating God's entrance into our human life for our redemption. By our celebration of it, we, along with John, Matthew, Luke, Paul, and all the rest, confess our faith that, through him, we have "power to become children of God" (*John 1: 12**). The historical Jesus is our Saviour and our Lord.

ORDAINED AND TESTED FOR HIS TASK

Read *Mark 1: 9-11; Matt. 4: 1-11.*

DURING the thirty "silent years" between our Lord's birth and the beginning of his active ministry, Jesus developed his powers of mind and spirit to full maturity as any normal boy and young man would do. We know very little of what happened during these years. Luke alone refers to them, and he has only two verses and a single incident. The verses are: "And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him" (*Luke 2: 40**); "And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man" (*v. 52**). The incident is his meeting with the rabbis in the Temple at Jerusalem when, at twelve years of age, he accompanied Joseph and Mary to the Passover. (*Vs. 41-51.*)

In the Jewish Mishnah (the interpretation of the law), there is a famous passage in which the stages of a man's life and their appointed tasks are set forth. The age of thirteen is indicated as the time when the Jewish boy was considered old enough to recognize the claims of the law upon his life. Similarly, thirty is the age of "full strength," or, as we should say, that at which "a man is at his best." Perhaps Luke presents the incident at the age of twelve in order to show that Jesus completely submitted himself to the discipline of humanity in becoming a full-fledged "son of the Law." Then, around the age of thirty, when a man was ready "to do the work of service, and the work of bearing burdens in the tent of meeting" (*Num. 4: 47*), our Lord entered upon his lifework of the ministry.

Jesus and the Prophet's Call

There is an artless simplicity in the way the four Evangelists describe how Jesus' ministry began. When we realize that for all four writers of the Gospels, Jesus was at once the Son of God and Lord of life, we cannot but read with amazement their straightforward account of his coming to accept baptism at the hands of a desert prophet, a "baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins"*! What a narrative! It begins with such a baptism and ends with a cross! Surely these writers were under compulsion of indisputable facts that, however much they may need to be explained, were life to these men, the very truth in which they built their faith.

Like Elijah of old, John the Baptist was calling men to face up to the demands of God upon their lives, to turn away (repent) from their self-worship and world worship to the service of the true and living God, and to make him alone Lord over their lives. Jesus heard this "call" while he was still roaming Galilaean hills and dwelling in his own town of Nazareth. No doubt John's proclamation was heralded far and wide across the entire land, for men would be in a fever of excitement at the appearance of a prophet in Israel after so many hundred years. Jesus, then, would have heard the call secondhand. But he left Galilee, determined to follow the prophet's call. (*Mark 1: 9.*)

But why did Jesus, the sinless One, require this sort of baptism? This perplexed even the Baptizer, so that he protested, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" (*Matt. 3: 14**). The key to the answer lies in our Lord's reply, "Thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness."* To the Jew, "righteousness" meant at least two things: the total nature of God as good in all his dealings with men, and the whole demand of God that man reflect that goodness in every particular. Here, therefore, Jesus speaks of God's total claim upon men's lives, and of his demand that they obey him to the uttermost. And what was true for all men was true also for the God-man. Jesus himself could in no way escape God's claim and God's demand upon him.

What did God command his Son to do? He sent him into the midst of a sinful people, a sinful world. And in that world he had to take a stand for God and for everything that represented God's will for man. This, then, is what is meant by his "fulfilling all righteousness."* All that God demands of man generally, Jesus must and will do because he has cast in his lot with man and his sinful world.

Ordained to His Ministry

At the baptism two voices spoke to Jesus. (See *Mark 1: 9-11.*) There was first the voice of John, and second a Voice from heaven. God generally speaks to us through others before he addresses us directly. This is natural in a world in which the lives of men are closely intertwined with one another and where no man lives and dies to himself alone. We see this phenomenon every day of our lives in the family circle, with its mutual dependence and responsibilities, and in every other group experience (social, economic, intellectual, political, moral, religious) in which we share. Life for men is made up of such a series of corporate experiences.

Accordingly, our Lord was now becoming heir of a long line of prophetic summonses, of which John's was but the last and nearest to himself. Through all of these God had spoken to their contemporaries as John was now speaking to the men of his day, including Jesus. Moreover, it is clear that God speaks directly only to those who have first listened to what he has said to others. Thus he prepares men to hear his voice speaking to them. Those not so prepared hear

What to Look For in This Lesson

1. What was the significance of the ages thirteen and thirty in the life of the average Jewish youth in Jesus' day?
2. Why was it necessary for Jesus to subject himself to baptism?
3. In what three particulars was Jesus tested for his task of Messiahship?

nothing or at most a mere "sound" (*John 12: 29; Acts 9: 7*).

This is the method of the schools. College subjects are not taught in the kindergarten. Students must advance from grade to grade. Our Lord made it clear that this is the order in the religious realm when he said, "To him who has will more be given" (*Matt. 13: 12**).

Therefore, our Lord subjected himself to ordinary human experience. First God spoke to him through a prophet; then God spoke to him directly. Yet Jesus knew what the Heavenly Voice would say to him! Possibly he had never phrased for himself just what it now said about him, but we may be sure that its content was not news to him. For this was the Father speaking to his only Son, and by this birthright Jesus was prepared to hear the message. It would not tell him anything he did not already know.

What, then, did the Voice say to him? In words drawn from *Ps. 2: 7* ("Thou art my son") and from *Isa. 42: 1* ("My chosen, in whom my soul delighteth"), it speaks of his Messiahship and of his fulfilling the role of the Suffering Servant.

Let us examine these two passages from the Old Testament more closely. *Psalm 2: 6-8* reads as follows:

"Yet I have set my king
Upon my holy hill of Zion.
I will tell of the decree:
The Lord said unto me, Thou art my son;
This day have I begotten thee.
Ask of me, and I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance,
And the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession."

The psalmist describes how God is inaugurating his Messiah as king over the whole earth. The inaugural formula is the same sentence used at the baptism: "Thou art my son; this day have I begotten thee." At the baptism, therefore, this was not a piece of information for the Lord's anointed; it was, rather, the words of coronation used on all like occasions as the ruler is inducted into office.

The baptismal Voice, then, is proclaiming at the beginning of our Lord's ministry that he is God's Messiah. But the Voice also has something to say to define the office. It is notable that the formula quoted from the psalm breaks off in the middle as it is repeated at Jesus' baptism, and in place of the second half are substituted the words from *Isa. 42: 1*, "My chosen, in whom my soul delighteth." This is a significant substitution, for this verse from Isaiah is the ordination formula of the Suffering Servant of the Lord. Accordingly, Jesus is being inducted into a Messianic office of a startling original type. It is no throne and crown of splendor that is offered to him. Rather, it is a position that will take him along a way of hardship leading to a cross-throne and to a crown of thorns! Therefore, from the beginning of his ministry our Lord knew that his Messiahship would be one of humiliation and suffering and tragic death at "the hands of sinful men."*

Tested for the Task

We can understand the temptations of Jesus correctly only as we study them in the light of this ordination to a ministry of suffering and death. An ordinary king, crowned monarch by the adulation of the crowd, would not face the same kind of temptations that Jesus faced. But a man who knew himself to be the Messiah under the call of God—a call summoning him to walk a bitter road that would end in a cross—would indeed be tempted to disobey God, to distrust him, and indeed to deny him. This, we find, is the burden of the three temptations.

We read the heart of each temptation in Jesus' reply to Satan. Satan offers a goal that on the surface seems alluring and even legitimate. But Jesus discerns the real nature of the bribe. He sees the price he will have to pay to reach the goal, and it is paying this price which he must firmly resist.

The first temptation is occasioned by hunger. Food was a natural need and a legitimate desire after forty days of fasting. No one would deny that. But the real problem is: How may and may not God's Son use his power in the world of human affairs? Jesus answers from an Old Testament passage upon which he had long nourished his soul and which therefore springs into instant use. It is found in *Deut. 8: 3*, where it refers to a similar temptation of Israel after the people had hungered in the wilderness. Jesus' answer begins with the word "Man." This is significant, for it is by what *man* can and cannot do that Jesus must now live his life and not by his prerogatives as Son of God. And it is equally notable that man's duty is defined "by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God,"* that is, by God's will. This temptation, then, is one to disobedience on Jesus' part. It is a temptation to disobey God in order to avoid what his Father demanded of him—the long, hard road of privation, suffering, and death. A miracle, changing stone into bread, would be far easier than accepting hunger, just as earthly glory would be easier than humiliation and disgrace. But one was God's will, and the other was not. So Jesus chose his road.

The second temptation follows psychologically upon the first. Here Satan wants Jesus to test God to see whether he will measure up in a crisis, assuming that one like Jesus has committed himself to utter obedience to God's will for his life. Our Lord's quotation from *Deut. 6: 16,* "Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God," clearly indicates this to be the meaning of the temptation for him. This, then, is a temptation to *distrust* God's assured care and power.

The third temptation is to *disloyalty,* as again appears from our Lord's quotation of *Deut. 6: 13,* "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God; and him shalt thou serve." Satan makes a bid for Jesus to become his, rather than God's, viceroy in the world. In this case the tempter is immediately dismissed. This monstrous thought cannot be harbored by our Lord for a moment!

In these three ways, then, our Lord was tested for his task of Messiahship. In each case he refused to pay Satan's price. Rather, he would pay God's price and achieve his inheritance by the bitter road that led straight up to the cross.

8

THE WORK OF THE SON OF MAN

Read *Matt. 11: 2-6; Luke 11: 14-23; John 12: 36-50.* Supplementary Reading: *Mark 2: 1 to 4: 20.*

ORDAINED to be the Messiah, or viceroy of God on earth and in his kingdom, Jesus was to enter into every experience of man in a sinful world in order to save him. He was to be God's servant, but a suffering one. This was the meaning of his baptism.

In his dark hour of temptation, our Lord thought through the implications of his Father's appointment. For the first time he came actually face to face with the stark reality of what these were. And he came to realize that if he were to be a Suffering Servant-Messiah, the path that lay before him could not be an easy one. He must dedicate his every effort, his every waking moment, his whole being and endeavor, to the task before him. There could be no mistake about this: The Father's "call" must mean all or nothing on his part. Either Jesus must decline the task, or he must frankly face its exacting demands upon him and bend all his energies in the direction of its accomplishment. Jesus chose the latter course.

These meanings of his baptism and temptation we considered in last week's lesson. Today we are to see how Jesus' entire ministry fulfilled the decisions made as his work began. At no time, as far as the record shows, does he attempt to dodge the severe implications of his call; nor does he waver in his faith that he has rightly interpreted his Father's will for his life. Rather, he begins at once to perform the task that is laid upon him.

We want also to observe how this affected the men among whom he labored; we shall see the challenge that his earnest words and deeds evoked in their breasts. He intended his teachings and "mighty works" to stab open their spiritual insight, so that they would accept him as their Lord. To him, their response to this intention was a matter of their life and death. In expressing his own intention and in eliciting their response, then, do we find the true significance of Jesus' word and work.

Jesus Challenges John

Not long after John the Baptist had presided at the ordination of Jesus, he was imprisoned by order of Herod Antipas, the ruler of Galilee under the Roman power. In prison men are often attacked by gloomy thoughts that they would banish easily in other circumstances. So it was with John; he began to grow impatient at the apparent slowness with which Jesus went about his task. No doubt his own enforced inactivity led him to chafe at the delay of the consummation of his hopes for his successor. Moreover, he had portrayed to himself and in his prophetic message a "mightier one," who would begin his saving activities with a sifting process, with condemnation of the wicked as well as with salvation of the people of God. (*Luke 3: 15-17.*) But the reports of Jesus' activities that filtered through to the Baptist in his confinement apparently lacked this harsher element. So he was stirred to send to Jesus a deputation of his immediate followers to make inquiries as to how matters stood.

There were three significant things in our Lord's reply to John's disciples: *First,* Jesus did not answer the Baptist's question directly. Rather, he suggested through the deputation that the evidence was at hand by which John must answer his own question! In effect, he said to the men: "Look round you, see what is going on, and report these things to your master. Then tell him that he must decide for himself whether I am the mightier one for whom he waits!" This sort of reply to such a question always characterized our Lord's attitude. He constantly refused to make up men's minds for them about anything, particularly about himself, their estimate of his person and work, or their responsibility to accept his message and claims upon their allegiance. Men are to face these questions and to decide them for themselves (*Mark 8: 27-30*); but they must be assured that as they make the decisions, they must count the cost involved in becoming his followers (*vs. 34-38*).

Secondly, it is worth noting that our Lord's reply

here is made up of materials drawn from *Isa. 35: 5* and *ch. 61: 1-3*, two passages in which the redemption of God's people is defined in terms of both evangelism and philanthropy. "The poor have good news preached to them"* is evangelism; "the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up"* is philanthropy. Our Lord wishes the Baptist to think of him not in terms of a Judge, but rather as a Saviour and Redeemer of God's people.

Finally, Jesus calls upon John to make a right decision about him on the basis of the evidence so clearly presented. "Blessed is he who takes no offense"* at such a picture of the mightier one! In effect, he means: "You shall be blessed, John, if you see in my ministry the work of God, even though it disagrees with your conception of what that ministry should be!" This challenge of Jesus is as relevant to us as to the Baptist. No doubt it is recounted by the Evangelist for just this reason. Matthew, in writing his Gospel, is not concerned merely to present us with a certain amount of interesting biographical material; all the Gospel writers have an evangelistic purpose in their writing. So the challenge of Jesus' word and work remains to this day and comes to us, as to men of old, in the form, "What think ye of the Christ?"

"The Mighty Works"

Further evidence of Jesus' power comes to us from "the mighty works" or miracles that he did. To people in dire distress of body and spirit he came with power to heal and restore. Such healing was the very essence of the salvation he came to bring. The miracle recorded in *Luke 11: 14-23* is particularly instructive in showing us the nature and purpose of all Jesus' miracles.

A certain person was possessed with a demon that made him silent. Jesus cast the demon out, and the dumb man spoke.

People in the Orient believe in demonic possession. Modern psychology might explain such a condition otherwise; but, however it might be explained, the fact remains that persons so afflicted face a gradual disintegration of the personality. Jesus showed a marked interest in these cases and effected in them a remarkable cure. In attempting to do this, he always started with the patient's own view of his illness (see, for example, *Mark 5: 8-10*), but enabled the afflicted individual to see himself as a person and so achieve some sort of integration in a sadly disorganized personality. Then, seeing himself as he really is, and so recognizing his need for help outside himself, the person feels a measure of reliance on Jesus' power to heal such a person as himself. Essentially, therefore, demon possession was cured by Jesus in the same way that the spirits of men are saved religiously: through faith on the part of the individual concerned in the renewing power of God's Spirit.

It should be obvious, then, what a terrible travesty of the truth was contained in the charge of Jesus' enemies that he was casting out demons by the power of Beelzebub. This name, meaning "the prince of demons," * is here used as the equivalent of Satan. To say that Jesus' power was from Satan rather than from the Holy Spirit was to call black white; it was to be living a lie, blinding oneself to God's holy truth, subscribing to a topsy-turvy view of things that could only mean the final destruction of all ethical and spiritual values. Jesus points this out in no uncertain terms.

Then our Lord states that there can be but one explanation of his success in delivering up those whom Satan has bound. In and through Jesus, *God's* sovereignty is being felt in the world of human affairs and human problems. How is it possible for God to overthrow Satan in demon-possessed people? Because of what Jesus did when he was tempted. Those temptations had proceeded from "the prince of demons" * himself; and since Jesus proved to be the "one stronger than he" * on that occasion, he overcame him once and for all. Wherefore, Jesus is now able to release the persons of those held in thrall by him. Thus, in a most striking manner our Lord challenges men to throw in their allegiance with one who in his own person represents the Kingdom, not of Satan, but of God.

By his word, and work, then, Jesus confronted men with the fact that the Kingdom of God was now present on the level of history; it had "come upon" them in the teaching and saving activity of Christ himself. His miracles were, so to speak, acted parables wherein the mighty Spirit of God was at work in the world, overthrowing the power of evil that had enthralled men by its cruel might. Equally, one might almost say, his teachings, especially his parables, were word miracles by which he drew men with their strange, fascinating power to see that God's Kingdom was already at work as leaven, as seed cast into a field, as "the seed growing secretly" beneath the soil of men's hearts.

Men's Responses to This Challenge of Jesus

Jesus cares whether or not men respond to his challenge. On every page of the Gospels there are sentences

What to Look For in This Lesson

1. What difficulties could Jesus have envisaged as he looked ahead to the task of Messiahship?
2. What evidence does Jesus point out to John's disciples to show that he is the Christ?
3. What connection is there between the works of "healing" and of "salvation" in Christ's casting out of demons from disorganized personalities? What do miracles teach about the Spirit of God as opposed to the power of evil?
4. Cite Gospel passages in which Jesus reveals a genuine concern about men's attitude toward his word and work.

like these: "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners" (*Mark 2: 17**); "He who has ears to hear, let him hear" (*ch. 4: 9**); "Go home to your friends, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you" (*ch. 5: 19**); "Who do men say that I am?" (*ch. 8: 27**); "But who do you say that I am?" (*v. 29**). And there are countless more.

Such observations and questions on the part of Jesus show that he was genuinely concerned about men's attitudes toward his word and work. This can be only because he knew these to be fraught with the issues of life and death for them. Consequently, we are prepared to hear our Lord say, in John's Gospel: "He who believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me" (*John 12: 44**); and again: "The word that I have spoken will be his [any man's] judge on the last day. . . . The Father who sent me has himself given me commandment. . , . And I know that his commandment is eternal life" (*vs. 48-50**).

Obviously, Jesus was conscious of sustaining a unique, saving relation toward men. In the temptations that came to him as he began his ministry, he had realistically faced up to the serious claims that such a redemptive mission would entail. His every word and act, therefore, were consciously directed to the fulfilling of his Father's will for the eventual salvation of men. But he could not force men to allegiance either to himself or to his Father. He could only present the rightful claims of both in his teaching and activity, in the hope that they would turn to himself as the Father's Viceroy in the world. They must respond of themselves in faith that he could save and that the Father had all rights, as their Sovereign, over their lives. This faith Jesus endeavored with all the resources at his command to call forth.

At times when men's hearts failed to respond to the warming influence of his love for them, he could but acknowledge defeat. Then, "he marveled because of their unbelief" (*Mark 6: 6**), and he had to concede that he could do nothing for them (*v. 5; see also Matt. 13: 58*). But equally when they came through with the faith he awaited, he "rejoiced with great joy." Observe his expressions of deep satisfaction when faith was displayed in either himself or his power to heal and save: "Take heart, my daughter; your faith has made you well" (*Matt. 9: 22**); "Your faith has saved you; go in peace" (*Luke 7: 50**). For a man's response to Jesus Christ was a self-judgment. The man with faith would be saved, the faithless man would be condemned; and Jesus cared tremendously which lot a man chose for himself. We shall consider man's response more fully in next week's article.

9

A NEW ISRAEL IS BORN

Read *Luke 4: 16-30; Mark 1: 16-20; 3: 13-19.*
Supplementary Reading: *Mark 2: 13-28; Luke 22: 14-23; John 15: 1-15.*

JESUS always makes men choose their loyalties. There is no lukewarmness as far as his claim on their affections is concerned; we are either for or against him!

From the days of his flesh onward men have had to make this choice, and always there has been a sizable company aligned against the Son of God. As a matter of fact, some of the Gospel writers, especially Mark and John, seem to have composed a large part of their "memoirs" of Jesus around this theme. Acceptance or rejection is the focal point of nearly everything Mark records; and John, observing the conflict in nature between "light" and "darkness" (*John 1: 5**), gives one example after another of how some men chose the light and others deliberately remained in darkness because they loved it more (*ch. 3: 19*).

Rejected by the Jews

The first effect of our Lord's ministry was the exposé of the "darkness." It occurred in his own home town of Nazareth. (*Luke 4: 16-30.*) Jesus, according to the custom of the synagogue in his day, with its entire freedom of worship, was asked by the "ruler" to read the Scriptures and to preach to the local Sabbath gathering. His choice of a passage from Isaiah (*ch. 61: 1, 2*) was carefully considered. It is not clear whether it was the normal passage to be read for the day or whether he deliberately chose it because he wanted to make it his text on this occasion. It seems, however, that even before the Christian Era the readings for the various Sabbaths throughout the year had been appointed by custom. In that case, if Jesus wished to preach from this particular passage, he must have elected to come to Nazareth on just this Sabbath, knowing beforehand what the reading would be. In any event, it was a reading that exactly suited his purpose. He knew what he was about as he stood up to read from Isaiah in the synagogue at Nazareth.

In the language of Jesus, which was Aramaic, the passage ran somewhat as follows:

"The prophet said,
The spirit of prophecy from before the Lord Elohim is upon me;
Because the Lord hath appointed me to preach good tidings to the afflicted:
He hath sent me
to strengthen the broken-hearted,

to proclaim liberty to the captives, and
to say to the prisoners, 'Come forth to the light';
to proclaim the year of acceptance before the Lord." (*The Targum.*)

The ancient prophet had described his own mission in these words, and now Jesus says, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."* This claim of Jesus came to the people of his home town as a distinct shock at first, for he identified himself with the prophet of Israel. But the claim was not to be denied if it could be supported with evidence. And after all, had they not heard of Jesus' astonishing powers displayed in Capernaum? (*Luke 4: 23.*) On the whole, they were impressed with his "gracious words" and proud to know that they knew his reputed father. (*V. 22.*) It seemed that the local son was making good!

But as they listened more intently to what Jesus was saying, they found his message extremely displeasing! He was speaking on a favorite theme of his —how no prophet had been acceptable in Israel but had rather been mistreated and done away with by the very people who should have accepted him as God's true messenger. (*Mark 6: 4; 12: 1-12; Luke 11: 47-51.*) Accordingly, God had at times sent his prophets to others than his people; and our Lord gave the great Elijah and his disciple, Elisha, as striking examples (*Luke 4: 25-27*).

This was more than Jesus' townsfolk could take with equanimity. Their fury was caused in a subtle way. It was not just that Jesus had evidently made great claims for himself; this, no doubt, they could have taken with a certain pride. Nor would they have been greatly disturbed had he claimed that they were obtuse in many ways. The point he was making concerned a combination of these ideas, and more besides. It was that they had been sent a great Leader by God himself, and they had not recognized him for what he was; therefore, *because of their spiritual blindness,* God had rejected them and had turned to the Gentiles. (Capernaum was a cosmopolitan city.) Naturally, such a forceful and "tactless" message stirred up much wrath among his countrymen! As one man they arose and thrust him from the city, intending to throw him over the cliff on the hillside. "But passing through the midst of them he went away." (*V. 30.**)

Jesus Begins to Form a New Congregation

Because of their unbelief, from that day forward he could do no more with the people of the synagogue. This marked his break with the "chosen people." He took the matter quite seriously; it was apparently symbolic to his mind of his rejection by his own people. The very thing had happened that he said was characteristic of Israel's treatment of the prophets—"in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house"* a prophet was not acceptable

What to Look For in This Lesson

1. Read again *Luke 4: 16-20.* In what way does this incident mark Christ's break with the "chosen people"? To whom would he preach henceforth?
2. Why was Christ rejected by the Jews?
3. What does Christ's choice of disciples reveal about the nature of the inheritors of the "Kingdom of God"?
4. Is there any particular significance in Christ's limiting the number of disciples to twelve?

(*Mark 6: 4*). For the transgression of blasphemy—claiming to be God—he was rejected by the Jews. (See *John 10: 33.*) So Jesus set about to form a new "people of God." He called the new chosen people with the words, "Follow me" (*Mark 1: 17 **); and the way the Evangelists report this call shows that it was given with an unmistakable ring of authority that could not be denied. Only once is a specific individual designated as having refused the call after Jesus had issued it to him. (*Ch. 10: 21-23.*) Only once also are the disciples said to have usurped Jesus' prerogative of issuing this call to join their ranks (*ch. 9: 38*), and on that occasion they are roundly rebuked for their audacity (*vs. 39-42*).

Our Lord's conscious authority in the choice of this little central group of his followers is shown in still another way. One might have expected him to choose them from among the rank and file of the recognized religious people of the day. Instead, he shows the most amazing originality in his selection. Of the twelve eventually chosen, four, at least, were fishermen not characterized for either their piety or their good judgment; one (Simon) was a Zealot, that is, a revolutionary of an extreme type; a sixth (Judas) was in all probability even worse; a seventh (Levi) was a publican and an outcast from the household of the faith. This leaves but five members, and, as events proved, these were the least important of the group. Evidently our Lord meant exactly what he said when he remarked in another connection, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners" (*Matt. 9: 13 **).

The Acted Parable of the Twelve

The final step in Jesus' establishing his new congregation was to limit the number of the nucleus to twelve. (*Mark 3: 13-19.*) This figure held deep meaning for any Jew who remembered the traditional number of his twelve-tribe people. It is therefore more than accidental that Jesus chose twelve followers as his intimates and then closed the invitation.

There were, of course, a great number of followers on the fringe, so to speak; a hundred and twenty could be gathered in Jerusalem immediately after Jesus' death (*Acts 1: 15*), and Paul speaks of five hundred

together in Galilee, following the resurrection (*I Cor. 15: 6*). The nucleus, however, was composed of the twelve intimates who were constantly with Jesus on his missionary tours; they were selected "to be with him, and to be sent out to preach . . ." (*Mark 3: 14* *). Beyond the sentimental significance of the figure to the Jews, is there any deeper meaning in the fact that only twelve men comprised that early band? Possibly so. Like the Hebrew prophets before him, Jesus might here be teaching a lesson to all who had the eyes to see its meaning. Among the prophets there had been many such enacted parables: Jeremiah's linen girdle (*Jer., ch. 13*) and the potter's clay (*ch. 18: 1-17*); Ezekiel's mimic siege of Jerusalem (*chs. 4: 1 to 5: 4*); and Hosea's adulterous wife (*chs. 1 to 3*). Jesus employed this method of teaching in other connections, such as his entry into Jerusalem in the terms of Zechariah's prophecy, the Lord's Supper, the foot washing, and the cleansing of the Temple. So the choice of only twelve disciples had a didactic purpose behind it. He was trying to teach the Jews that the Messiah had come and had already established the nuclear "remnant" that would grow into a new people of God in due time. This was the new people of the new covenant (discussed in Lesson 2 this quarter), who would serve God in spirit and in truth. It was only through the establishment of a "new covenant," with all the authority of the old one, that the new people could be prepared. And how better could this be exemplified than in a group numbering the same as the original tribes, with their Messiah at its head? Whenever, then, this group entered a town of Galilee, it would, so to speak, itself be preaching the message of the gospel. "Here is the new Israel, here is the Messiah of God's choosing," it would seem to say! (See *Isa. 8: 18* and *Heb. 2: 13*.) That the number *must* remain intact appears to have been Peter's contention, even after the resurrection. (*Acts 1: 22*.) Peter does not show himself to be concerned in the slightest about *whom* the assembled Church elects to take Judas' place; his interest is simply in the maintenance of the right figure!

Our Lord, then, foreseeing his rejection from the old Israel, took steps to call forth a new one, motivated by devotion to himself as Leader. To this "little flock" he was sure God would give the Kingdom.

10

THE WITNESS OF FAITH

Read *Mark 8: 27 to 9: 8.*

We have seen how Jesus, following his baptism and temptations, went about "doing all things well"—as the common people put it—by word and deed. He taught and healed because he found men in dire need both of his gospel message and of the healing of body, mind, emotional life, spirit. But these things which he did had about them a distinctive quality that made men feel that they must make up their minds about Jesus. "Who, then, is this?" they were impelled to ask. For they were either strangely attracted toward him or else repelled by him! And they gained the impression that he would have them believe in him and in his power to save life at every level.

But Jesus did more than this: he called a favored few to be with him and to become the nucleus of a new people of God. These "twelve" were given special opportunities. They accompanied him on his tours; they saw his indefatigable labors; they listened to his oft-repeated message of the Kingdom of God; they beheld his deeds of healing; they saw and felt his compassion on the shifting crowds with their seemingly purposeless lives. Then Jesus gave these intimates of his special instruction from time to time. Now and again he had them withdraw to some sheltered retreat for just this purpose. (*Mark 6: 31.*) As they advanced beyond their contemporaries in moral and spiritual discernment, it was natural that he should take them farther than these others. (*Ch. 4: 10-12.*)

Moreover, our Lord endeavored at times by an apt question to draw out his disciples and to lead them to self-expression. "Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?" (*V. 13.**) "Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Having eyes, do you not see, and having ears do you not hear?" At times he even chided them with words like these: "Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?" (*Mark 4: 40.**) "Do not be faithless, but believing." (*John 20: 27.**) All this was certainly with a view to challenging his disciples above all others. Finally a time came when our Lord felt that these intimate disciples of his must be given a more formal examination.

They Call Him Christ

We read of this examination in *Mark 8: 27-30*. It occurred in the region of Caesarea Philippi, north of the Sea of Galilee, and under the shadow of Mt. Hermon. It was not long after the disciples had been sent out on their own, with a view to their trying their developed skills in the fields of *evangelism* and *humanitarian labor* (*ch. 6: 7-13*). On their return Jesus withdrew with them for purposes of retreat and rest. (*V. 31.*) But it was not easy to be alone with his little band; the needy people and those always seeking for some exciting novelty dogged his steps wherever

e went. (See *chs. 6: 30 to 8: 26.*) And so it was only s they walked along the road "to the villages of aesarea Philippi"* that Jesus felt they were in a sufciently quiet spot for unhurried discussion.

Jesus had two purposes in pursuing this examinaon: *First,* he wanted to ascertain just how far they ad come in their thinking regarding his person and ork. From this standpoint, his interrogation of the isciples on this occasion was but the culminating iece of his numerous challenging quizzes of them, and deed of his many searching "feelers" directed to e common people (*Matt. 12: 3-5, 11*), to the Baptist *h. 11: 6*), and even to his own kith and kin (*ch. 2: 46-50*). He was most anxious now to discover how ar he had got with his disciples, for his time was drawg short. *Secondly,* he wished to bring the disciples' ith to the point of conscious expression. There is an ld saying, "Expression deepens impression." Our ord wanted his disciples to phrase in words the halfrmed views that they entertained about him and to ave them, as it were, stand back and look at what ey said with a degree of calm detachment. There is reat psychological advantage to be gained by such calm appraisal of one's attitude. For without it here can hardly be further advance in thought and ecision. But once this sort of "mental stock-in-trade" s taken, it becomes possible for the teacher to go head from that point. And the issue of the affair hows that this is exactly what Jesus wished now to do.

We said above that our Lord's time was becoming hort, and this was an added reason for his quizzing is disciples on the present occasion. We read in Mark ow the Pharisees were beginning to draw their net bout him. (*Chs. 7: 1-23; 8: 11-13.*) And John has n entire chapter (*ch. 6*) on the point, concluding ith the observation that "many of his disciples drew ack and no longer went about with him" (*v. 66**). ohn even suggests that as a result of these hostile moves, our Lord asked his disciples—and the quesion seems almost an anxious one—"Will you also go away?" (*v. 67**). Jesus saw the coming struggle already upon the horizon; therefore, it was important hat he should train his followers as quickly and fully as possible to take over the work.

The question with which he opens the examination, "Who do men say that I am?" (*Mark 8: 27**), is merely introductory. All the Gospels testify to the fact that from the very start of his ministry the crowds held Jesus for a *prophet.* (*Luke 9: 8; John 4: 19.*) Jesus therefore knew the answer to this first question before asking it; and, furthermore, he knew that the disciples could answer it without hesitation. So it was merely the beginning; it served, so to speak, "to clear the air." Incidentally, it also no doubt pointed up the question that the disciples had for some time been asking themselves. (*Mark 4: 41.*) And in doing so, it gave them the extra moral—as well as intellectual—bracer needed to face the really vital problem, "But who do you say that I am?" (*v. 29**).

What to Look For in This Lesson

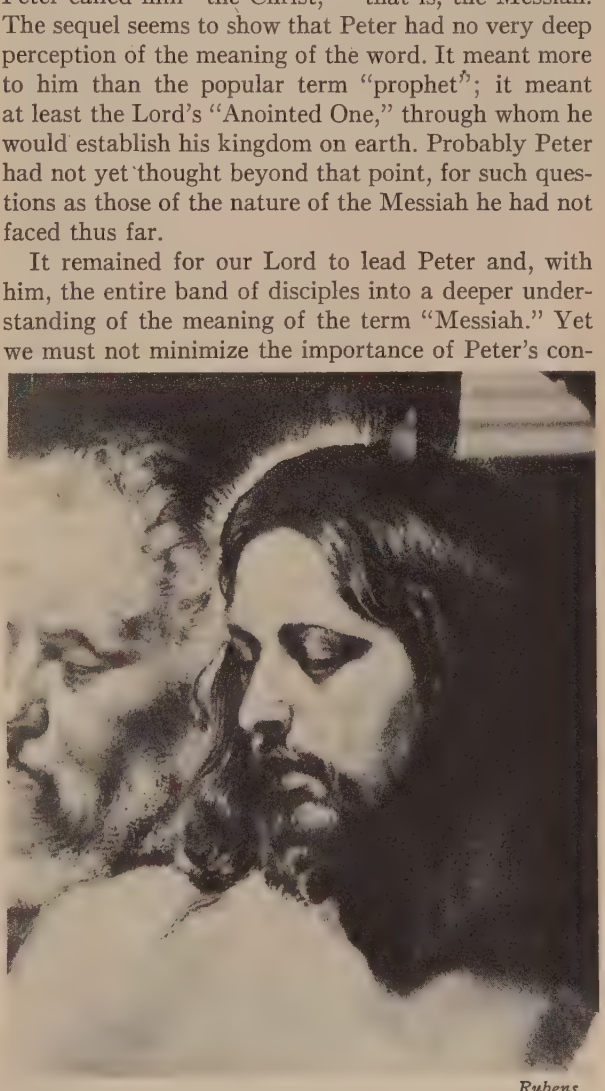
1. Read *Mark 8: 27-30.* What were some of the popular views as to Jesus' identity? In what terms was he identified by the disciples?

2. What did Christ teach the disciples about Messiahship and what it would mean for him and for them?

3. How did God confirm Christ's identity before Peter, John, and James?

Peter, at least—and no doubt he was speaking for the group as a whole, or most of it—was ready with an answer. It was not the popular answer that Jesus was a prophet. It is notable that Jesus' disciples had never called him that, though doubtless they would not have refused the title to him if asked. But their term for him had been "Teacher," "Master"—"Rabbi" in the language of the day. Now of a sudden Peter called him "the Christ,"* that is, the Messiah. The sequel seems to show that Peter had no very deep perception of the meaning of the word. It meant more to him than the popular term "prophet"; it meant at least the Lord's "Anointed One," through whom he would establish his kingdom on earth. Probably Peter had not yet thought beyond that point, for such questions as those of the nature of the Messiah he had not faced thus far.

It remained for our Lord to lead Peter and, with him, the entire band of disciples into a deeper understanding of the meaning of the term "Messiah." Yet we must not minimize the importance of Peter's con-



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THE HEAD OF CHRIST WITH PETER

fession. He did not realize the full import of what he said; but that *he said it,* speaking for most of his associates, meant that they had the faith and courage to ally themselves with Jesus as the Leader sent by God; and to do so against opposition. This was a great victory for our Lord. It was the goal toward which he had been working all along. For if they would only believe in him against every odd, then obviously he could commit to them greater treasures of knowledge for which the crowds were unprepared. "For to him who has will more be given," he had said (*Matt. 13: 12* *), and they were now to experience this in actual fact. They were about to be promoted to a deeper knowledge of Jesus' person and work than any of which they had ever dreamed. By the same token, he "charged them to tell no one about him" (*Mark 8: 30* *), that is, that he was the Messiah. A man must discover that for himself as the disciples had done. Then Jesus would go on as now with them to say what sort of Messiah he was!

The Messiah Must Suffer

Jesus proceeds to define Messiahship in terms of suffering and death rather than in terms of glorious rule and power! The "Son of man," who had "nowhere to lay his head" must "suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and scribes, and be killed." * These ideas he must have taken from the concept of the "Suffering Servant" of the ancient prophet and combined with the other Old Testament ideas of "Son of man" and "Messiah." It made a startling combination—Son of Man, Suffering Servant, Messiah! What an anomalous grouping of terms! Yet now the ground was prepared, and he could tell his disciples of the deeper significance of earlier experiences—his baptism and his temptations, in terms of suffering, death, and eventual triumph.

Proceeding, he calls to himself the multitudes, to issue to them for the first time a clear call to follow him to the cross. (*Mark 8: 34-38.*) It could not be expected that they would understand at the moment, but they could scarcely forget his call; and later events would bring it back prominently to their minds. The call to self-denial and assuming of the cross is followed by the warning that those who do not heed it will lose their lives, because the Son of Man will deny them in the Last Judgment if they deny him now. (*Vs. 35-38.*)

The Transfiguration and the Call of the Church

Shortly after the event just narrated—Mark says "six days" later—another event of equal importance transpired. This was the transfiguration of our Lord, as described in *ch. 9: 2-8.* The second event *did not just happen* to follow the first almost immediately. There is an inner harmony of meaning and purpose between the twin events that has deep spiritual significance for us.

But first let us inquire why Jesus took only three disciples with him on this occasion, and why he chose these three—Peter, James, and John. The answer appears to be that they were a little inner group who more deeply apprehended our Lord's purpose in his ministry, and, accordingly, he felt a closer bond of fellowship with them than with the others. This is borne out by other considerations. For example, it is a matter of record that James and John felt that they had reason for thinking that they might be favored with posts of honor in Jesus' Kingdom (*ch. 10: 33-37*). Peter, too, was generally the group's spokesman in dealings with our Lord (see *chs. 10: 28; 11: 21; 14: 29*), and Jesus at times addressed him in that capacity (*Luke 22: 31*); all three incidents in our lesson for today illustrate this. Then, too, Jesus' sense of nearness to these three was to appear in the Gethsemane incident at an hour of stress and anxiety. (*Mark 14: 32-42.*) We may well believe, therefore, that James and John were known to share, more fully than the other nine did, Peter's insight that had led him to exclaim, "You are the Christ." If so, these three more particularly were ready to advance to higher spiritual ground. It was the principle of spiritual growth in practical operation—"To him who has will more be given."*

Moreover, these disciples were in need of something; they had, thought Peter, testified to a high view of Jesus' person and work. They required, accordingly, confirmation from God that they were on right lines. This, then, was the purpose of the vision; for a moment the veil was torn aside, and they saw Jesus transfigured before them in the glory that was to be his as God's Messiah. It was only a temporary glimpse at the future exaltation of our Lord, but that was enough to carry them on in the tragic days to come.

Finally, this incident includes the "call" of the Church, even as the Voice at the baptism had given Jesus his call to service. Note that the words of the Voice here are directed to the disciples: "This is my beloved son; listen to him" (*ch. 9: 7* *). This last clause was a rebuff to Peter, who, when "he did not know what to say," could be counted on saying it! But it was more. It was the reminder that Jesus had more to tell the little band and little time in which to do it. He had to prepare it to carry on his work of redemption; he also had to prepare the Church for the cross it was to bear in his name. "Listen to him" is good counsel for the Church in any age! This would include reiterated reference to his task of redemption and to the cross that the Church must share with him. (*Ch. 8: 34.*)

IN THE SHADOW OF THE CROSS

Read *Mark 11: 1-10, 15-18, 27-33.*

WE COME now in the story of Jesus Christ to Holy Week. Matters are approaching the finale with Jesus. Of this he has certainly been aware for some time. Ever since Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi he has been spending his time doing two things: *first,* instructing his disciples in the mystery of his own person (*Mark 9: 31; 10: 32-34*) and in the fact that, being what he is, he must suffer death at the hands of sinful men and then be raised up; and *secondly,* issuing a call to the multitudes to enter the Kingdom of God (*ch. 10: 13-16, 24*), a course of action that will involve following after him in the way of the cross (*ch. 10: 21;* cf. *ch. 8: 34*).

There is no certain indication of how long Jesus engaged in teaching these two new points. It was probably no more than a few weeks or months at most. What we have in the Gospels appears to be a mere summary of the teaching, without recognizable boundaries of time. (See *Mark 9: 30, 33; 10: 1, 17.*) But it is with these teachings that the Evangelists begin to draw the shadow of the cross across the way Jesus and his disciples must travel. Luke adds the fact that these teachings were uttered while Jesus and the disciples were on the way to the Holy City; this is a dramatic way to keep the events that will happen in Jerusalem before our minds.

Therefore, we see that the final section of each Gospel is devoted to what Luke calls "his departure, which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem" (*Luke 9: 31**). In Mark it begins at *ch. 11: 1* and runs through to the end. This was probably the earliest part of the Gospel to be put into writing. Perhaps it took shape shortly after Pentecost, as an apologetic for the Christian Church's belief in its dying and risen Messiah. It is reassuring to know that this portion of the Gospels—the very *sanctum sanctorum* of the Christian faith—can be relied upon as a very early witness to the facts, composed by "eye-witnesses" of the events.

Entry of the King of Peace

Our Lord "must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things" (*Matt. 16: 21**). He had said himself with unerring irony, "It cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem" (*Luke 13: 33**). Jesus went to the Sacred City, therefore, fully conscious that he must die there. But it would be a great mistake to think that he went up on this last occasion in a spirit of fatalism and with the feeling of "What's the use?" To the last our Lord pursued an even course of preaching, teaching, healing, and challenging men to accept his person and his gospel. The days of Holy Week, right up to the end, including his trials, were full of earnest endeavors to win men: his *enemies,* the Pharisees; his *judges,* the Sanhedrin; the *common people* of the city; even the despised *Gentile governor,* Pilate.

The incident that opens Holy Week is usually termed "the triumphal entry." It was hardly that in fact. Our Lord himself intended his entry to the Sacred City as a dramatic fulfillment of the ancient prophecy:

> "Behold, thy King cometh unto thee:
> He is just, and having salvation;
> Lowly, and riding upon an ass."
> (*Zech. 9: 9.*)

But the people did not so understand it. Look at the record.

Note first that the shouts with which he was hailed (*Mark 11: 9, 10*), which have usually led to the conclusion that he was recognized as the Messiah, are in reality merely a free rendering of *Ps. 118: 26.* This psalm was one of the Hallel Psalms which were sung by the pilgrims going up to the feasts at Jerusalem and were arranged for antiphonal singing between the pilgrim bands, on the one hand, and the priests and Levites who greeted such bands at the Temple gates, on the other. And it is significant that the Mishnah relates that the lulab, or branches, with sprigs of myrtle and willow attached, were waved by the crowds only at *Ps. 118: 25!* Jesus and his little band, then, were simply being received at the Temple gates as any other band of pilgrims, with the same antiphonal singing and the same exuberant waving of branches! Note also that when the crowd was asked who Jesus was, it replied, not that he was the Messiah, but, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth of Galilee" (*Matt. 21: 11**). John also adds this comment on the whole affair: "His disciples did not understand this at first" [the fact that he was fulfilling the Zechariah prophecy]; "but when Jesus was glorified,

What to Look For in This Lesson

1. What two things chiefly did Christ endeavor to do toward the end of his life?

2. Read *Mark, ch. 11,* "probably the earliest part of the Gospel to be put in writing." In what respect could Jesus' entry into Jerusalem be called an occasion of humiliation rather than of triumph?

3. How did Jesus address his appeal for a change of heart to the priests? What criticism did he make of the activities in the Temple?

4. On what basis did the Sanhedrin reject Christ's credentials?

5. How relevant for our own day is this matter of Jesus' authority?

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then they remembered that this had been written of him and had been done to him." (*John 12: 16.**)

It seems likely, therefore, that Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on this occasion was one of humiliation rather than of triumph! It was humiliating because he was definitely challenging the people of the Sacred City to recognize their King Messiah in his lowly guise as King of Peace, as portrayed by the old prophet. But they were not looking for such a king, and so they could not recognize him for what he was!

However, the point to note about these events is that Jesus had carefully planned his entry so that it would challenge the people of the Holy City to recognize their Messiah when he should come. The colt tied before the door of a village home is witness to this fact. (*Mark 11: 2-7.*) So is the "password" relative to the Lord's having need of it. (*V. 3.*) Jesus was well known and had both disciples and Jewish friends ready to serve him. There is at least one other incident—that of the arrangements in the upper room for the Last Supper—which testifies to carefully arranged plans on our Lord's part during this same week. (*Ch. 14: 13-16.*) So the Holy City was being given a last chance to accept Jesus as Messiah and Lord.

As Jesus viewed his entry into Jerusalem, it was intended to be, indeed, a "triumphal" one; surely he was hoping that he would be accepted for what he was, the King of Peace, entering the city on a humble animal, rather than upon a dashing charger, symbolic of worldly power. As the event proved, however, he was to be misunderstood by the crowds, attacked by the civil and religious rulers, and turned over to the Romans to be crucified.

"The Lord . . . Will Suddenly Come to His Temple"

During Holy Week Jesus carried his challenge farther into the heart of contemporary Judaism. As in his entry into the city he purposely fulfilled the prophecy of Zechariah, so also when he came with sudden and vivid force into the Temple (*Mark 11: 15-18*) he doubtless had in mind Malachi's prophecy that the Lord would suddenly come to his Temple (*Mal. 3: 1*). Once again, this was with no spirit of bravado, but rather with an evangelistic motive. He hoped that the religious leaders of the people would recognize and accept him for what he was. They do, indeed, appear to have seen the point, as we shall observe a bit later (*Mark 11: 28*), and in this they were apparently more astute than the common people in the former incident. But they were not prepared to accept.

Two things in the narrative are to be noted more particularly: *First,* Jesus claimed an unusual authority with reference to the Temple. He made a whip of the small cords lying about the floor (*John 2: 15*) and drove out the cattle being sold in what the Talmud terms "the bazaars of the sons of Annas," the stalls sanctioned by the high priest in which the sacrificial animals with the necessary ceremonial qualifications were sold; he overturned the little tables at which the Temple half shekel could be purchased by those having other coinage; he told those selling doves and pigeons to take them outside; and he allowed no one to walk by with an article for sale in the Temple courts. Here surely was an astonishing claim to a unique sort of authority over the house of worship of the people! It raised the question, "Who is this who makes such an amazing claim?"

Now what exactly did Jesus criticize in the Temple activities? This is a *second* point of particular interest in the story. It has been suggested from time to time that Jesus opposed the sacrificial system as such, but of this there is no evidence. He never showed any active interest in the system, it is true, but he did tell a leper to show himself to the priest, that he might be pronounced "clean," and to offer the required sacrificial animals and meal offerings prescribed by the law (*Mark 1: 44*). What Jesus opposed in the Temple procedure was its provincialism and its materialism. The stalls for this Temple traffic were set up in the Outer Court, the one set aside for Gentile converts to Judaism. Since these Gentiles were excluded from the inner courts, their frustration in trying to worship amidst the hubbub of such commercial traffic may be better imagined than described. What had become, then, of the prophetic universalism that promised "the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the Lord," a share in Jehovah's "holy mountain" and in his "house of prayer"? (See *Isa., ch. 56.*) Similarly, our Lord evidently saw in the avaricious way that the Temple's high-priestly overlords sought after wealth a repetition of the materialism of Jeremiah's day, which then, as now, centered in the Temple and its priestcraft. (See *Jer. 7: 11.*) So it was to the priests that our Lord directed his second appeal of Holy Week, because their sins in the Temple were bold and rampant. But here too he failed. First the people, now the priests, refused to accept the Messiah.

Question of Authority

After he threw down the gauntlet in such a definite nd authoritative way on two occasions, the groups ncerned naturally asked where he got his power. By what authority are you doing these things?" *Mark 11: 28.**) This was just the question he wanted em to ask, because his answer to it would force em to recognize who he claimed to be.

It was an authoritarian group that framed the ques- n put to Jesus. It consisted of chief priests, scribes, nd elders in the Sanhedrin. This was the highest verning body within Judaism. It held its meetings a special room provided for the purpose in the emple area, and by all accounts kept a watchful eye n all that touched the cultural life of the Judaism of e day. So the authorities asked the authority for s credentials. Our Lord's reply threw his critics into quandary. It related to the work of John the Baptist, hom the authorities had not officially recognized. hey could scarcely say of John that he was a true ophet, for the immediate question would emerge: Why had this august body, the religious authority ithin Judaism, not embraced his cause and given it eir benediction?" On the other hand, they dared not ce the popular displeasure by denouncing him as n impostor, a "false prophet," to use the old term of gone days.

It is to be observed that Jesus had no intention placing the representatives of the Sanhedrin in this mpossible predicament. Had he done so, he would ve been acting quite "out of character"; Jesus never ndeavored by word or act merely to frustrate, be- ddle, or embarrass. His question had plumbed a far eeper depth than any suggested by such a surface dgment of his purpose. He was trying to discover ne degree of spiritual or moral insight in his inter- gator, so that he could build more faith upon it. We ay be certain that, had the representatives of the nhedrin been able to answer satisfactorily his ques- tion about the authority of the Baptist's preaching, Jesus would at once have stated frankly in their presence the nature of his own. For were not both authorities, that of John and of himself, from the same Source and alike in kind? The Baptist's had been indeed "from heaven," from the Spirit of the true and living God, who had commissioned him as a prophet. Jesus' authority, too, issued from that same Spirit. Had the membership of the Sanhedrin possessed the insight to see that the Baptist was a true prophet, then Jesus would have known that they would also readily apprehend the nature of his own rights as Messiah in the Sacred City and its Temple. It would have been foolish to answer the question about his authority directly, telling them it came from God, because they would not have understood or accepted such a claim. They had spurned John's credentials; they would spurn Jesus' as well.

This matter of Jesus' authority is no pleasant academic diversity even for us. By what authority does Jesus claim to be Lord of your life and mine? By what authority does he challenge *our* provincialism and materialism? If we say it is from God, then we must follow or be practical atheists; if we say it is from men, then we reject the Lord of Christian faith and life. On *our* answer to this question hangs our destiny.

The Lesson for December 23

The lesson for Christmas Sunday, entitled "Redemption Through the Son," will be found on page 69 of this magazine. Teaching guidance for this lesson can be found in *Westminster Teacher.* No lesson is prepared expressly for Christmas Sunday in the *Christian Faith and Life* series, because there is this appropriate one in the International Uniform Lesson series.

12

DEATH AND RESURRECTION

ead *Mark 14: 22-25; Luke 23: 33-49; I Cor. 15: 3-8, 12-20.*

N OUR lesson of December 16 we looked at a series of selected events of Holy Week. These and thers we saw to be "acted parables," a teaching evice that Jesus, like the Hebrew prophets before im, liked to employ. These parables were *object ssons* much like those used in our modern educa- onal methods. They had the advantage of making ne teaching appealing to Jesus' auditors, so that al- ost against their wills—at least, in the case of his nemies—they were attracted to what he had to say.

The acted parables of Holy Week in each case contained the note of challenge to one group and another to ally themselves with him. But we saw that, despite the appeal of this device, Jesus' hearers rejected him and his claims on every side. The common people did not even understand the import of what he was trying to teach them about himself, and his enemies—the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians—definitely refused to accept him.

But their attitude was more than passive refusal. It was active opposition to Jesus and his work, opposition that culminated in his death by sinful men. It was *moral blindness,* on the one hand, and *base*

impiety, on the other, that were responsible for what happened on Calvary. History has made it a matter of simple record that the Jewish religious leaders and the Roman governor, Pilate, who together were the representatives of "law and order" in Jerusalem, were men who "feared the people" and wished at all costs to appease them. (*Mark 14: 2.*) But the Jews had shut their ears to the prophetic note uttered by both John the Baptist and Jesus, for they had discerned in what they heard a high spiritual quality beyond both their comprehension and control. Jesus' spiritual dynamic appeared to them more dangerous to their prestige than a sudden tumult among the common people. Biding their time, therefore, and meantime dallying with the traitor, Judas, they succeeded in striking a blow at a time when the people were preoccupied with their preparations for the Passover Feast. Quickly calling together their Sanhedrin, they brought in lying witnesses—men who could not comprehend the meaning of the words they may have heard our Lord utter, condemned him, and handed him over to the weak governor, whose one interest was the security of his own position among a strange people.

*"This Is My Blood of the Covenant"**

Our Lord saw to it, however, that before the end he should have quiet fellowship with his immediate disciples. (*Mark 14: 22-25.*) He contrived to accomplish this without Judas' knowing in advance either the time or the place of the rendezvous, in which case the traitor would give both away to the enemy, and Jesus' last hour with his friends would be rudely disturbed. He had arranged with a friend to await his messengers; the sign would be that the man would be holding "a jar of water" on his head (*v. 13*), a very uncommon sight in the East, where the women are the usual drawers of water! Following him, they were to say to the householder where he entered, "The Teacher says, Where is my guest room, where I am to eat the passover with my disciples?" (*v. 14**). In this subtle way, our Lord kept the secret of his place of meeting from Judas and secured a few brief hours for final discourse with his disciples.

It is important to notice the phrase "my guest room" in the question given to the disciples as the password. Jesus here clearly constitutes himself the host at the banquet that is to follow in the upper room, and the disciples by the same token are his guests. This is all very significant; indeed, the whole teaching of the passage hinges on a right understanding of the implications of these suggestions.

In the prophetic writings of the Old Testament, the Kingdom of God had often been likened to a banquet scene, in which God himself was the host and his people were his guests. The familiar words of *Ps. 23: 5,* "Thou preparest a table before me," are illustrative of this fact. *Isaiah, ch. 55,* also contains the idea; and it is basic in the interpretation of the "peace offering,"

What to Look For in This Lesson

1. What does the Lord's Supper stand for? The lesson gives several meanings of this.
2. How did Christ make his cross a throne?
3. According to Paul, what is the connection between Jesus' resurrection and ours?

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wherein the worshiper and his friends sit down before the Lord to a common meal of fellowship. The literature of later Judaism contained some fantastic elaborations of this banquet scene in the Kingdom of God; it was said, for example, that no fish or animal meat would be served of smaller proportions than leviathan and behemoth, the monsters of the ancient world, and no drink in less quantities than that suggested by the size of the bunch of grapes brought back to Israel by the twelve spies! But it was without these fantastic embellishments that the banquet idea was taken over by the Christian Scriptures, and our Lord himself repeatedly used the metaphor to describe the blessings of the Kingdom of God. (See *Matt. 8: 11; Mark 14: 25; Luke 14: 15-24.*)

On three occasions the Evangelists represent our Lord as serving as the host at the Kingdom banquet table: at the feeding of the five and four thousand (*Mark 6: 34-44; 8: 1-10,* respectively), and at the Lord's Supper. In the upper room, therefore, we have another of the acted parables of Holy Week and one of great significance. Its clear meaning will be: "Here is the Messiah, officiating by right as God's Viceroy in his Kingdom, dispensing the Kingdom's gifts to his chosen guests, giving to men those high spiritual blessings which only God can give, consummating between God and man that fellowship of which the ancient peace offering was the symbol—that Supper in glory which is the end and aim of all true religion.

Essentially, then, the Lord's Supper stands for the renewal of the covenant between God and man. The covenant relationship had been broken by man's sin, particularly by Israel's sin (*Jer. 31: 31-34*). It had, therefore, to be renewed. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel." (*V. 31.*) Jesus, accordingly, on this occasion testifies that he is the renewing agent, and the Lord's Supper and its elements are the symbols of that renewal. (*Mark 14: 24.*) Therefore, as he distributes the bread and the wine, he refers to the one and the other as the symbols of his "body" and "blood." Obviously, these are not his actual body and blood. The idea involved in the Mass confuses literal fact with metaphor, or with what we have termed "acted parable," in a hopeless way that can only result in utter misunderstanding of our Lord's teaching.

But there is an even deeper meaning attached to the banquet of the Lord's Supper. We have seen that each acted parable of Holy Week contained a challenge to one group or another. So it is with this event in the

upper room. The renewal of fellowship that it symbolizes between God and man through God's Mediator calls every true follower of the Christ to share with him in the redemptive task symbolized by the broken bread and the wine. This banquet is a feast of consecration to that task for which the Church was founded; for the Church, along with the Messiah, is to share in the corporate responsibility of the Suffering Servant to go forth and save the world. (See *John 15: 1-15; I Cor. 10: 16-22.*)

*"Father, Forgive Them"**

In this final lesson we can only select events of Jesus' last hours for consideration. Therefore, let us turn now to the crucifixion, as described in *Luke 23: 33-49.*

The single point that stands out with great prominence in this picture of the crucifixion is that our Lord succeeded in dominating the scene, even as he had been the leading figure in every other scene of Holy Week. With this highly significant fact in mind, someone has described him as "the Messiah who reigns from a cross." He converted his cross into a throne and ruled men from its lofty height.

Three elements of the incident as reported in this Gospel support this conclusion. The first of these is found in the words, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (*v. 34**). Jesus himself had made it clear in his teachings that forgiveness is the very acme of true love. To love another as far as to be able to forgive anything that the other does is to be godlike. This is very instructive, particularly in the light of our modern psychology, which teaches that the person who can forgive is the man who is completely sure of himself and the essential rightness of his own position. Our Lord, then, fulfills the requirements of such teachings by forgiving his enemies in the very act of their attempting his downfall. The raillery that is proceeding at the moment on the part of rulers, soldiers, and one of the criminals, heightens the effect. (*Vs. 35-39.*) Jesus is never more in command of the situation than as he hangs on the cross, for under these adverse and trying circumstances he does the impossible: he forgives his enemies.

The second point in the passage that clearly shows Jesus as the master of the situation is his promise to the dying criminal. (*V. 43.*) This occasion would appear to be the worst possible time to make promises with any hope of being able to fulfill them. From the world's standpoint Jesus' cause has completely failed, and he is another of the impossible fanatics whose accounts and stories occur in pages of history. So matters appear to most of our Lord's contemporaries, including one of those being crucified with him. But the other one has deeper moral insight; he sees in Jesus at least the sinless One, and he believes that to such a one the ages belong. Consequently, he makes of our Lord the kind of request that Jesus never denied: "Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingly power" (*v. 42**). That our Lord can answer at that dark hour, "Today you will be with me in Paradise" (*v. 43**), indicates how very little he is influenced by the events going forward at the moment. To dispense favors of the eternal Kingdom in such a situation is truly to "reign from the cross"!

Finally, the confidence with which our Lord committed himself to his Father at death is evidence that here a king controls the situation. "Into thy hands I commit my spirit!" he said (*v. 46**); and John's Gospel adds the words, "It is finished" (*John 19: 30**). These are the regal exclamations of a man who sees in his death the fulfillment of an appointed task. Brutal and anguished though it was, he completed his course. So he dies as he lived, convinced that he was being obedient to the will of God. The bystanders did not see all this assurance, confidence, and control; what they saw was a by-product of such confidence. They saw an innocent man die bravely, and the way he died led the pagan centurion to bear witness, "Certainly this man was innocent!" (*Luke 23: 47**). Again, Christ rules over men from his throne, the cross.

"The Firstfruits of Them That Are Asleep"

For our final event from the life of our Lord we turn, not to the record of what transpired, but to a passage that tells what this event—the resurrection—means to his followers. *I Corinthians 15: 3-8, 12-20* gives us, not only a résumé of the appearances of the resurrected Lord, but also a suggestion of the significance of his resurrection for believing Christians.

Two facts of the utmost importance stand out in Paul's list of the resurrection appearances: First, none but believers experienced them; secondly, most of these believers were still alive when Paul wrote (*v. 6*). The former fact speaks much for the veracity of the accounts. The Early Church did not claim that pagans could testify to the fact of the resurrection. Such testimony would have been completely out of harmony with the spirit of the gospel and its teachings. It would have been of the nature of forced "signs" of a type that our Lord steadfastly refused to give to his enemies. Only believers could apprehend the spiritual nature of the "sign" that was constituted by his person; similarly, only such could share in his resurrection fellowship. The second fact speaks for itself. The resurrection of our Lord was a historical event contemporary with the people for whom Paul wrote, and anyone who did not believe in it had only to contact those who could bear witness to it!

The purpose of the chapter from which we are reading, therefore, is not to prove our Lord's resurrection. On the contrary, starting from his resurrection as a known fact, Paul's aim is to base thereon the certainty of the resurrection of believers. It appears from what he writes (*vs. 12-20*) that some of the Corinthian Christians denied the likelihood of such a resurrection on speculative grounds. This is not surprising. The resurrection was denied generally within Greek circles, where the teaching was prevalent that man's person

was divided into the two parts of soul and body, and that of these two only the former was "immortal" by nature. Paul himself had been mocked in Athens when he had spoken of the resurrection. (*Acts 17: 32.*)

The Hebrew prophetic psychology, however, was much nearer to our own today, as it taught that soul and body are so interrelated as to be essentially one. The "body" was the functioning instrument of the person and not to be separated from the "soul." A disembodied person was, in consequence, as unthinkable to the Hebrew as to us. In the present chapter, therefore, Paul is arguing for the continued individual existence of the individual believer. Our Lord's resurrection guarantees that those united with him in a living fellowship shall have a new body that will be a gift of God, one adapted to a higher order and capable of functioning there. (*Vs. 35-50.*)

A BOOK REVIEW

Old Wine in New Bottles

Old Wine in New Bottles, by Gardiner M. Day. (Morehouse-Gorham Co. 118 pages. $2.00.)

Here is a fresh approach to the Ten Commandments that is stimulating and refreshing. The author presents in a positive way the inner meaning of the Decalogue for the needs of our day. He gives the historical background of the Commandments, together with a modern interpretation that every layman can understand. He states that "people who break the Commandments are not usually lacking in ethical insight, but rather in religion." His thesis is that when we have "a love, trust, and love and fear of God" we shall have the "courage and determination to obey God and keep the Commandments." "The First Commandment is . . . the motivating power for all the others," for "unless we give priority in our lives to our allegiance to God, the other nine Commandments are of no consequence." His study of the Third Commandment gives new emphasis to Christian commitment. "The Third Commandment is the toughest of them all, because it hits us where we live—not in relation to theft, or covetousness, or some other specific action, but as a challenge to us to be honest with ourselves in making our actions square with our words." The last chapter is Christ's summary of the Commandments.—*Gilbert J. Kuyper.*

YOUR SCRIPTURE STUDY FOR THE WEEK
(Home Daily Bible Readings)

1. Abraham, Father of God's People

Oct. 1—*Gen. 11: 29-32*
Oct. 2—*Neh. 9: 5-8*
Oct. 3—*Heb. 6: 13-20*
Oct. 4—*Isa. 41: 8-10*
Oct. 5—*Gal. 3: 1-9*
Oct. 6—*John 8: 51-59*
Oct. 7—*Heb. 11: 1-8*

2. Jacob, Man of God

Oct. 8—*Gen. 27: 34-40*
Oct. 9—*Gen. 28: 10-17*
Oct. 10—*Gen. 28: 18-22*
Oct. 11—*Gen. 32: 22-32*
Oct. 12—*Gen. 32: 7-12*
Oct. 13—*Gen. 35: 9-15*
Oct. 14—*Ps. 4*

3. Joseph's Place in the Plan

Oct. 15—*Gen. 37: 1-11*
Oct. 16—*Gen. 37: 18-28*
Oct. 17—*Gen. 41: 37-45*
Oct. 18—*Gen. 45: 1-15*
Oct. 19—*Gen. 50: 15-21*
Oct. 20—*Rom. 8: 26-30*
Oct. 21—*Ps. 92: 12-15*

4. Israel in Bondage

Oct. 22—*Ex. 1: 1-7*
Oct. 23—*Ex. 1: 8-14*
Oct. 24—*Ex. 2: 1-10*
Oct. 25—*Ex. 2: 11-15*
Oct. 26—*Ex. 2: 16-22*
Oct. 27—*Ex. 2: 23-25*
Oct. 28—*Ps. 27: 7-14*

5. When Man Meets God

Oct. 29—*Ex. 3: 1-6*
Oct. 30—*Ex. 3: 7-12*
Oct. 31—*Ex. 3: 13-22*
Nov. 1—*Ex. 4: 1-9*
Nov. 2—*Ex. 4: 10-17*
Nov. 3—*Ex. 4: 27-31*
Nov. 4—*Deut. 32: 1-7*

6. "Let My People Go!"

Nov. 5—*Ex. 5: 1-14*
Nov. 6—*Ex. 6: 2-9*
Nov. 7—*Ex. 7: 14-19*
Nov. 8—*Ex. 12: 1-14*
Nov. 9—*Ex. 12: 29-36*
Nov. 10—*Ex. 15: 3-10*
Nov. 11—*Ex. 15: 14-18*

7. The Law and the Covenant

Nov. 12—*Ex. 18: 13-27*
Nov. 13—*Ex. 20: 3-17*
Nov. 14—*Ex. 21: 2-6*
Nov. 15—*Ex. 21: 12-15*
Nov. 16—*Ex. 22: 1-6*
Nov. 17—*Ex. 23: 20-33*
Nov. 18—*Deut. 6: 10-17*

8. The People Worship God

Nov. 19—*Ex. 24: 1-8*
Nov. 20—*Ex. 25: 1-9*
Nov. 21—*Ex. 25: 10-22*
Nov. 22—*Ex. 29: 1-9*
Nov. 23—*Ex. 29: 38-46*
Nov. 24—*Num. 9: 15-23*
Nov. 25—*Ps. 100*

9. Rebellion Against the Lord

Nov. 26—*Ex. 32: 1-6*
Nov. 27—*Ex. 32: 7-14*
Nov. 28—*Ex. 32: 25-29*
Nov. 29—*Ex. 32: 30-35*
Nov. 30—*Num. 14: 1-10*
Dec. 1—*Num. 14: 26-35*
Dec. 2—*Deut. 11: 13-25*

10. The Choice

Dec. 3—*Deut. 29: 1-9*
Dec. 4—*Deut. 29: 14-29*
Dec. 5—*Deut. 30: 1-14*
Dec. 6—*Deut. 32: 8-14*
Dec. 7—*Deut. 32: 15-20*
Dec. 8—*Deut. 33: 26-29*
Dec. 9—*Deut. 30: 15-20*

11. Chosen for Battle

Dec. 10—*Josh. 2: 15-21*
Dec. 11—*Josh. 3: 7-17*
Dec. 12—*Josh. 6: 12-21*
Dec. 13—*Josh. 7: 10-15*
Dec. 14—*Josh. 8: 30-35*
Dec. 15—*Josh. 10: 6-14*
Dec. 16—*Hab. 3: 6-15*

12. Redemption Through the Son

Dec. 17—*Luke 1: 26-38*
Dec. 18—*Luke 1: 46-55*
Dec. 19—*Luke 1: 67-79*
Dec. 20—*Luke 2: 8-14*
Dec. 21—*Luke 2: 15-20*
Dec. 22—*Luke 2: 22-32*
Dec. 23—*Isa. 9: 2-7*

13. "We Will Serve the Lord"

Dec. 24—*Josh. 23: 1-4*
Dec. 25—*Josh. 23: 5-11*
Dec. 26—*Josh. 23: 12-16*
Dec. 27—*Josh. 24: 5-13*
Dec. 28—*Josh. 24: 15-18*
Dec. 29—*Josh. 24: 29-31*
Dec. 30—*Ps. 44: 1-8*
Dec. 31—*Isa. 60: 19-22*

Theme for This Quarter: PIONEERS FOR GOD

The Beginnings of the Hebrew Nation

ABRAHAM, BY GUY ROWE

Our lessons this quarter center in early Hebrew history. The lessons are of interest to Christians, because through the life of the Hebrew nation we see the working out of the purpose of God in history. He worked through men; so the first three lessons deal with the men God used to set in motion the plan that was to culminate in the redemption of mankind by Jesus Christ. He worked through a people; therefore, the remaining lessons interpret the meaning of great events in the development of Israel from its bondage in Egypt to the conquest of the Promised Land.

Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph—the men whose careers we shall study in our first three lessons—are living illustrations of the essential faith of the Bible.

Lesson 1—ABRAHAM, FATHER OF GOD'S PEOPLE

(Abraham, God's Pioneer)

Lessons 1-7 are based on material prepared by David Noel Freedman and David M. Thompson

THE father of a people! Historical accounts make dull reading most of the time, but the lives of national pioneers frequently are of extraordinary interest. The book of Genesis contains just such a story of a man whose colorful career as an adventurer for God is rich in romantic appeal. That man was Abraham, the father of the Hebrew nation. Here was a man after God's own heart. His relationship with God was so intimate that his descendants referred to him simply as "the friend of God" (*James 2: 23*). The author of The Epistle to the Hebrews cites him as a hero of the faith (*Heb. 11: 8-10*), one of the towering figures of Old Testament history.

Abraham had many qualifications for success. He was a man of achievement—capable, daring, resourceful. He was mighty in the councils of war and an able harvester of the fruits of peace. He was courageous, a captain of men.

At the same time, Abraham was a human being, a man like other men, with imperfections and character defects. We ought never to make the mistake of supposing that those whom God selects are a sinless breed of men. It comes as a salutary warning in the estimation of Abraham's character to find side by side the account of his magnificent response to the call of God and a sordid tale of intrigue.

Yet Abraham is still the hero of faith. It is the power of the Spirit of God working in a man that makes him an effective servant, not the intrinsic qualities, good and bad, in his makeup.

His Call and Departure

"Get thee out of thy country." The history of salvation begins with a peremptory command. These words were addressed to Abraham. On his response hinged the course of Biblical history and the nature of our faith. He left his kindred and his home in obedience to the heavenly call and set out for a far country, there to establish a new house, which was to become the people of God. It was no easy decision to make—to leave behind family and friends and to strike out into an unknown land. (Of course, his immediate family went with him, including his nephew, Lot.) But it was through the response and unquestioning adherence to instructions of this one man that God was able to set his plan in motion.

The consequences of Abraham's acceptance of the challenge were two: (1) God would, through him, create a nation: "I will make of thee a great nation." (2) Beyond the consequence for this one people was the promise of divine blessing for the whole world, to be mediated through this nation. Abraham's descendants would be judged great according to their obedience to God and the way in which they carried out his will on the earth. Israel's fame was to spread abroad among the nations of the world, not because of the prowess of its leaders, the magnificence of its cities, or the extent of its territories, but because its life and its work would bear testimony to the living God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth and the Redeemer of men. Furthermore, the purpose of God was not limited to the life of the nation, but extended beyond it and through it to the world. Through Abraham, that is, through the nation that was to come from him, the world would receive the blessing of God. In this way we understand that the choice of Abraham and his descendants and the special role assigned them in the divine program are not marks of favor,

The Scripture Lesson for October 7

Scripture: *Gen. 11: 27 to 13: 18*

The Printed Text: *Gen. 12: 1-9; 13: 14-17*

(American Standard Version)

Gen. 12: 1 Now Jehovah said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will show thee: *2* and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and be thou a blessing: *3* and I will bless them that bless thee, and him that curseth thee will I curse: and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed. *4* So Abram went, as Jehovah had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran. *5* And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came. *6* And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Shechem, unto the oak of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land. *7* And Jehovah appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto Jehovah, who appeared unto him. *8* And he removed from thence unto the mountain on the east of Beth-el, and pitched his tent, having Beth-el on the west, and Ai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto Jehovah, and called upon the name of Jehovah. *9* And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the South.

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Ch. 13: 14 And Jehovah said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward and southward and eastward and westward: *15* for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. *16* And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then may thy seed also be numbered. *17* Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for unto thee will I give it.

arbitrarily bestowed by the deity, but consist, rather, in an election to service by which the benefits of God will come to all.

By the same token the protection promised to Abraham and the blessing that accrues to him are not to be regarded as a reward for obedience, but as a by-product of faith. We find it hard to get away from the idea that material prosperity is a payment made by God in return for the promise of allegiance and devotion. But nothing could be farther from the truth. God blessed Abraham richly, so that this man would have the resources to carry out his appointed task. All gifts of God to Israel and to the church today have the same purpose of stewardship.

For the man of faith, for the man who responds to the call of God, there is a sense of the reality of God's presence that other men cannot have. This is the "reward" of faith, or rather its real meaning in the life of men, and expresses itself in spiritual well-being. Thus when the Scripture speaks, "And I will bless them that bless thee, and him that curseth thee will I curse" (*v. 3*), this is to be understood in the light of the purpose of God in Israel, and of his presence with Abraham and those who hold his faith. The nation that is hostile to Abraham is hostile to God and is cursed by being cut off from his presence. Likewise, those who befriend Abraham as the representatives of God thereby receive the blessings of communion with him.

The Separation of Lot

Abraham and his people prospered in the new land. Under the protection of God and the wise leadership of the patriarch, his flocks and herds grew great; his wealth increased in proportion. Already the promises of God were being fulfilled. But then there arose trouble in the family. His nephew Lot also prospered, and soon the two found their abundance becoming a curse, for the land could not support both family groups. Inevitably, disputes arose among the herdsmen over water rights and possession of the best grazing lands. Conditions grew worse until a real feud threatened to develop.

By custom, by any civilized conception, the obligation to take the initiative in seeking a settlement was on Lot. He was the younger; he had attached himself and his flocks to Abraham's party for the trip from Haran. He had submitted to his uncle's counsel and direction in dealing with the inhabitants of Canaan. He had shared the good fortune that had come to Abraham. Now, when his own personal interests threatened the welfare of the entire group, surely the responsibility to seek a peaceful solution was his.

But Lot did nothing. The break was not far off when Abraham, seeing that a parting of the ways was necessary, approached the younger man. He offered Lot the first choice of the land before them.

Lot showed no gratitude at his uncle's generosity. He looked the situation over carefully and noted that on the east lay the fertile, well-watered lands of the Jordan Valley, lands that were to be compared with Eden itself. By contrast, the hilly land of Canaan to the west was less desirable. Lot had no difficulty in making the decision. Without hesitation, he chose the fertile plain of the Jordan.

Abraham could only turn away to the hills on the west, a move that had far-reaching consequences for the Children of Israel. This episode determined the territory that was ultimately to belong to Abraham's descendants.

The Sacrifice of Isaac

As the years went by, Abraham settled down permanently in Canaan. But the fulfillment of the promise that he would be the father of a great nation seemed beyond possibility. Both Abraham and Sarah, his wife, were advanced in years. When the idea of their having a child was mentioned by the Lord, they could only smile to themselves.

But the unusual happened. Sarah conceived and bore a son, Isaac. The lad was a living sign of the covenant between God and Abraham, the pledge of its fulfillment. Through this boy and his descendants would the nation be formed. Not many years later, God determined to put Abraham's faith to the test over this son, for all the father's hopes were centered in the lad.

"Take now thy son," God commanded, "thine only son, whom thou lovest, even Isaac, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains."

Human sacrifice was not uncommon in Canaan. The sacrifice of the firstborn was regarded as an act of great piety and devotion to the gods. This practice was not to die out completely in Palestine for many centuries, being revived especially in times of distress, when extreme measures were taken to insure favorable action on the part of God and appease his wrath. (See *Judg. 11: 30-40.*)

Abraham did not falter. He prepared to carry out the heartbreaking task. He might wonder at the mystery of God's ways, but he could not doubt his protector and friend. At the last moment, when the sorrowing but obedient father was about to plunge the knife into the heart of his son, the angel of the Lord called to him and told him to spare the child. The test had been met; Abraham was not found wanting in his faith in God.

The way Abraham met his test was typical of him. He has come down in history as the pioneer of faith, the man who responded to the call of God. Because of his response God was able to begin the work that produced the nation of Israel and culminated in the coming of the Messiah, the ultimate descendant of Abraham and the Redeemer of the world.

Questions for Discussion

1. Discuss the character and personality of Abraham. What were his good and bad qualities?
2. In the call of Abraham, what is the relationship between the response in faith and the blessings that he received?
3. Compare the ways in which Abraham and Lot acted in the controversy over the land.
4. What is the significance of the story of the sacrifice of Isaac as (*a*) a test of Abraham's faith and (*b*) a story with implications for fulfillment of the plan of God.
5. What is the significance of the story of Abraham for Christians today? What is his role in the redemptive purpose of God? What are the features of his character and activity that stand as examples for Christian behavior today?

Lesson 2—JACOB, MAN OF GOD

(Jacob Receives the Promise)

A MAN'S first meeting with God is always a tremendous thing. It was so with Jacob, the son of Isaac. For him it changed a routine act into an unforgettable experience. It halted his downward progress through life, causing him to turn back upon his evil past, to retrace the steps that had led him away from his Maker. It marked the beginning of a new era in his life. The point of Jacob's story is that his experience is possible for every man. Today God still offers to take our selfish lives and to transform them, even though that transformation may involve, as it did in Jacob's case, a long and bitter struggle.

An Unscrupulous Past

There was nothing about the night to make it different. The same stars looked down; the same night wind rustled over the desert sands as the weary Jacob lay down to rest. He had slept in the desert a thousand times before and would a thousand times again. There was nothing in the setting to prepare Jacob, man of the world, unscrupulous hero of a sordid past, for the awful experience of meeting his God in a spectacular way.

Perhaps, as he pillowed his head upon the stone and waited for sleep to come, there ran through his mind recollections of a life devoted to self-advancement. He had come far without doing anything actually wrong. It is no crime, he rationalized, for a man to put his own interests first, to support himself with his wits as best he can.

But a vague uneasiness might well have filled his mind as he thought back over certain incidents. He had always been jealous of Esau, his twin brother. Even at birth he had caught hold of Esau's heel in an effort to become the first-born. The rivalry that began at that moment had flared again and again through their boyhood. But in the end, Jacob reflected with satisfaction, *he* had won.

It was pure chance that he had prepared some food the day his brother had come in famished from the hunt and had demanded a portion for himself. Surely no wide-awake businessman could blame Jacob for extracting a promise of his brother's birthright in exchange for the food, since the stupid dolt could not wait even a moment longer for the refreshment to be had for the asking at his father's tent!

But it hadn't ended there. Just a few days before, he had gained a final triumph. He could still see the stricken look on Isaac's face when the blind father realized that Esau had been tricked out of the special blessing that was his as the first-born. As for Esau, he was wild with rage and disappointment.

In fact, it was to escape his brother's wrath that Jacob was out here on the desert, bound for Haran and the house of his mother's brother Laban. For Rebekah had suggested to Isaac that it would be well for Jacob to seek a wife from the north, and Isaac had snatched at this opportunity to separate the two warring brothers.

So Jacob settled himself for sleep, satisfied that nothing could stop him now. With his escape from the vengeful Esau, with the inheritance already his, with every prospect of securing a good and fruitful wife to rear the sons who would carry on his name, he could well be content.

* * *

It was a shaken Jacob who awoke from his rest, for he had dreamed a dream so vivid that it seemed, even now in the clear light of morning, as real as life itself. In his sleep he had seen a ladder reaching up to heaven, with angels ascending and descending on it. Then the Lord God had stood before him and had renewed that

The Scripture Lesson for October 14

Scripture: *Gen. 27: 1 to 33: 17*

The Printed Text: *Gen. 28: 10-22*

(American Standard Version)

Gen. 28: 10 And Jacob went out from Beer-sheba, and went toward Haran. *11* And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took one of the stones of the place, and put it under his head, and lay down in that place to sleep. *12* And he dreamed; and, behold, a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and, behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it. *13* And, behold, Jehovah stood above it, and said, I am Jehovah, the God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; *14* and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. *15* And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee whithersoever thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of. *16* And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely Jehovah is in this place; and I knew it not. *17* And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.

18 And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put under his head, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. *19* And he called the name of that place Beth-el: but the name of the city was Luz at the first. *20* And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, *21* so that I come again to my father's house in peace, and Jehovah will be my God, *22* then this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.

romise which he knew had first been ade to his grandfather Abraham and en to his father Isaac.

The Land of Canaan in which he ow stood was to belong to him and o his children's children, who would e spread out over the land as numer- us as the dust of the earth. Through im and his family all nations would e blessed in time to come. The pro- ection of God would belong to him nd his family wherever they should o.

The vision of the ladder was a remendous experience for Jacob. Now, in the calm of day, he could atch something of the meaning be- ind that overwhelming visitation of he night. He had been chosen by God, long with Abraham and Isaac, who ad been chosen before him, to be he recipients of divine blessing, the earers of divine promise. Hence- orth, he was to be God's man.

In that hour Jacob's life underwent subtle yet significant change. He as still the same clever, wily, re- ourceful Jacob; but there was a ifference. His physical and mental esources were now motivated by a nore worthy purpose—to secure for imself and his children the fulfill- ment of the promise of God and the lessing to come from it.

Long ago he had heard from his insmen of the call that came to Abraham, a call that had in turn een extended to Isaac his father. Now this same call had come to him, ringing with it a new sense of mis- ion, of importance in God's plan.

A New Ambition

Gradually Jacob, the ambitious ounger son, the self-made man, be- ame filled with an overriding de- ermination to carry through his new destiny. The stamp of God was upon im now; nothing could distract him rom his new obligation. Even the abor of fourteen years for Rachel as nothing compared with the end in iew.

Perseverance for a purpose became he keynote of Jacob's life. He had nly, one goal in mind—his eventual eturn to Canaan and the establish- ment of his house, the first steps in the fulfillment of the promise.

This sense of destiny for Jacob trongly influenced his behavior. Throughout his long stay with Laban, ll his efforts were concentrated on maintaining the integrity and im- proving the status of his family un- til he had accrued enough wealth to undertake the journey back to Canaan.

To achieve this purpose Jacob used his native cunning. This is a fact we must accept but need not condone. Time and again he showed he was not above skulduggery. Through shrewd manipulation of the flocks belonging to Laban, he man- aged to secure the best for himself. Yet Jacob was but matching wits with a man equally as slippery, for had not Laban changed his wages many times during the twenty years of their association?

But the important change in Jacob was this: Whereas before he had been conscious of his own best interests for selfish reasons of personal gain, now he was bending every effort to fulfill his part in the plan and promise of God. With this new sense of dignity, of mission, he felt justified in using his shrewd and cunning tal- ents for the fulfillment of his pur- pose. He believed he could not have survived otherwise. And survival was essential to God's purposes and plans.

But as Jacob prospered in the serv- ice of Laban and at the latter's ex- pense, he grew in disfavor with his master. So it now seemed time to carry out his desires and return to his homeland.

Return to Canaan

As Jacob drew near his former home, the old uneasiness returned. What would be the reaction of Esau, whom he had wronged so terribly? Was it possible that his brother would work, in the end, to prevent the ful- fillment of the promises of God, which now meant all the world to Jacob? He must have felt trapped by the evil pattern of his own past as he left behind the uneasy truce he had made with one disgruntled col- league—Laban—and marched into the arms of Esau, the symbol of all that was lacking in his early life. In the past Jacob would not have been so deeply disturbed. He would have worked out a way to escape from this crisis, as he had escaped many times before. But now it was different. Jacob's participation in the plans of God had changed his outlook on life.

Never before had Jacob made peace —always he had run away from his sins, unreconciled with the one he had wronged. As long as there were other countries to flee to, that method might work. But when a man was trying to work out his life in accord- ance with the purpose of God, a dif- ferent way must be found. His per- severance with Laban through the long years was necessary to the es- tablishment of his family; now recon- ciliation with Esau was also necessary. He must make peace with his brother, or the promises of God could not be accomplished.

At first Jacob was terrified at the thought of the meeting to come. But his natural guile, in no sense blunted by his new friendship with God, did not fail him. When he first received the alarming news of Esau's approach with four hundred picked men, he devised a number of plans designed to mollify his wrathful brother, includ- ing many rich gifts for him. This was not entirely trickery on Jacob's part. The train of gifts was a mute confes- sion of wrongdoing. It was a planned attempt to make up for the past and a plea for forgiveness.

After sending his wives and chil- dren across the stream Jabbok, he remained behind. He was now to ex- perience the second crisis of his des- tiny: he was to wrestle with the angel of God.

Questions for Discussion

1. Describe Jacob's meeting with God from Jacob's point of view. Analyze Jacob's state of mind, experience, growing sense of family fi- delity, and reaction to the first words of God. In what way did all of these contribute to the way in which Jacob met the crises of his life?

2. Everyone at some time has an encounter with God. Let the mem- bers of the class describe their own personal experiences of this nature.

3. What is the essential meaning of the wrestling episode? What are the concrete details in regard to it? What interpretation is to be placed upon this experience of Jacob? What opinions and beliefs are reflected in this story?

4. Jacob's story is a "pilgrim's progress" to real companionship with God. Analyze Jacob's career in spiritual growth, religious development, and character transfiguration.

Every Man's Story

If Jacob's vision of the ladder symbolized his encounter with God and his summons to the life of faith, then the bout with the angel signified the bitter struggle Jacob had in trying to respond to the call of God. It also pointed to its successful outcome. The nightlong battle reflected Jacob's whole religious pilgrimage. It exemplified the long struggle he had with himself and with God before his allegiance was determined once and for all.

This was the final indication that Jacob had grown up spiritually, that he had found for himself a religion of maturity. The victory that Jacob won over the angel was in reality a victory over himself. That victory did not come easily, but only through persistent struggle. His triumph symbolized his entry into the real life of the servant of God. This was the climax of his long climb up the ladder of religious faith. He had striven with God and with man, and had won. His whole character and nature had been transformed. The magnitude of that change is seen in his relations with Esau.

The reconciliation of Jacob and Esau is a fitting climax to the story. Here we have anticipated the message of the gospel—the redemptive purpose of God among men. The tragedy of the human race has been the alienation of man from God, and along with that his alienation from his brothers. The condition and goal of the Christian life is the reconciliation of man with God and also with his neighbors.

Jesus said a great deal about this matter of reconciliation. He warned us that there can be no true worship of God without the reconciling of brothers. (*Matt., ch. 5.*) And the writer of I John emphasizes this thought—"If any one says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen" (*I John 4: 20,* R.S.V.).

From its inception the Church has been the instrument and medium of reconciliation, bringing together diverse and hostile groups, breaking down the barriers of hatred and enmity that have divided the human race since the time of Cain and Abel. In the parable of the Prodigal Son, Jesus describes the reconciliation of man with God, but it is important to remember that at the end Jesus sets in the foreground the unresolved problem of the reconciliation of the brothers.

In the story of Jacob we can find another divine message on this subject. It supplies the answer to the story of Cain and Abel and the right conclusion to the parable of the Prodigal Son. For Jacob was reconciled first with God and then with his brother.

Lesson 3—JOSEPH'S PLACE IN THE PLAN

(Joseph's Part in God's Plan)

THE purpose of this lesson is to show the way in which the overruling providence of God operates in human lives. Providence is a mysterious thing. No man understands precisely how and why it operates. But to Israel, the story of Joseph was a remarkable instance of Providence, acting in the life of the nation through the career of a single individual. God had established a plan for the salvation of men; Joseph was one of the agents through whom that plan became a reality. How this Hebrew rose from slavery to a place where he alone could preserve his people is perhaps the best Old Testament illustration of God's determination to let no worldly circumstance frustrate his plan for his people. The key to the story is *Gen. 50: 20:* "Ye meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive."

Later Israel Looks at Joseph

The story of Joseph was one of the most popular of the early sagas of Israel, because it illustrated in brief the whole career of the nation. The Jews considered God's readiness to turn the evil plans of Joseph's brothers into good a symbol of the concern he showed toward the nation throughout its history.

Israel recognized that Joseph's life was one of almost unparalleled adversity and trouble. By himself he would have been powerless to escape from the snares that human unkindness had laid for him. Yet through Providence these same evil deeds served to accomplish the will of God. In a like manner, the Jews saw the story of their nation depicted in the career of this one man, Joseph: Israel was suffering at the hands of its enemies, but God was using the suffering as the means by which he might mold the nation into the instrument of mankind's salvation.

Thus to the Israelite mind the tale of Joseph was more than merely the romantic account of the rise of one early Hebrew adventurer; it was a biography that dovetailed closely into the development of the nation at a crucial point in history.

A Family Fights for Survival

The general purpose of God for Israel was to establish in Canaan a people dedicated to him, a people called to serve him and to carry out his plans for the redemption of humanity. If this is so, what were the chosen people doing in Egypt? Why did the patriarchs leave the land that had been promised to their fathers and that was so important in the fulfilling of God's plan? The normal expectation would be that the family would take root and grow, occupying, through the years, more and more of the land that was to belong to them.

But the plan of God called for the removal of Jacob and his family into Egypt and the later return of their descendants. Behind that aspect of the will of God there stands a vast complex of reasons—social, economic, and political. The people of Israel would not simply come into possession of the Promised Land through long tenure as resident aliens. Instead, these people who had been tolerated guests were to return as triumphant conquerors to claim their heritage. At the same time, they would be preserved by God from possible extermination as a distinct nation.

To understand why migration was necessary, we must examine some of the factors that governed life in Palestine from the middle of the seventeenth century B.C. on. The land was the vortex of swirling streams of hu-

nity that brought with them in-sion and counterinvasion. The omised Land was a battleground er which nomads and seminomads, ndits and raiders, fought for pos-sion. Life was continually unset-d by the turmoil arising from the ption of these peoples into the d.

In addition to the almost constant ife, there were periodic famines. nen the inevitable crop failures k place, the Canaanites were ac-stomed to send caravans down into ypt, whose well-watered Nile Val-could always be counted upon to pply abundant food for all.

The family of Jacob was in a dan-ous position. It was threatened by man peril and the general uncer-nty of life in Canaan. There was ways the danger that it might be allowed up by the shifting popula-n or fall victim to a powerful in-der. During this period of confusion gypt obviously would be a much tter place in which the fledgling tion could ride out the storm.

Jacob and his sons doubtless had nt many relief caravans to Egypt ring time of starvation. But after e such occasion, this emergency easure crystallized into established olicy—the family stayed on in gypt.

This major shift in policy was all part of the plan of God. To carry nt that plan God used seeming coin-dences and miraculous interven-ons. How cruel and God-defeating emed the act of Joseph's brothers sending the boastful lad to Egypt a slave! But God took this jealous t and used it for his purposes.

Again, it seems mere coincidence nat some years later the man in harge of Egyptian food had a spe-al interest in the family of Jacob. nder ordinary circumstances they ould have been treated like the no-ads of the desert who commonly ame into Egypt for food during mine and then returned to their omes. Instead, they were dealt with oyally and allowed to make their ome in the land of plenty. What eems like an accidental interplay of iverse factors was actually the work-g out of the purpose of God. It is nportant, however, to understand nat God did not arrange these de-ils like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, lanning and plotting cruelty and mine so his purposes could be chieved. Rather, he saw how the in-

The Scripture Lesson for October 21

Scripture: *Gen., chs. 37; 39; 41 to 47; 50*

The Printed Text: *Gen. 47: 1-7; 50: 18-24*

(American Standard Version)

Gen. 47: 1 Then Joseph went in and told Pharaoh, and said, My father and my brethren, and their flocks, and their herds, and all that they have, are come out of the land of Canaan; and, behold, they are in the land of Goshen. *2* And from among his brethren he took five men, and presented them unto Pharaoh. *3* And Pharaoh said unto his brethren, What is your occupation? And they said unto Pharaoh, Thy servants are shepherds, both we, and our fathers. *4* And they said unto Pharaoh, To sojourn in the land are we come; for there is no pasture for thy servants' flocks; for the famine is sore in the land of Canaan: now therefore, we pray thee, let thy servants dwell in the land of Goshen. *5* And Pharaoh spake unto Joseph, saying, Thy father and thy brethren are come unto thee: *6* the land of Egypt is before thee; in the best of the land make thy father and thy brethren to dwell; in the land of Goshen let them dwell: and if thou knowest any able men among them, then make them rulers over my cattle. *7* And Joseph brought in Jacob his father, and set him before Pharaoh: and Jacob blessed Pharaoh.

* * * * *

Ch. 50: 18 And his brethren also went and fell down before his face; and they said, Behold, we are thy servants. *19* And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? *20* And as for you, ye meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. *21* Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them.

22 And Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he, and his father's house: and Joseph lived a hundred and ten years. *23* And Joseph saw Ephraim's children of the third generation: the children also of Machir the son of Manasseh were born upon Joseph's knees. *24* And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die; but God will surely visit you, and bring you up out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

volved human relationships of the events could be used for his plan.

Along with the preservation of the family, the Egyptian sojourn had an equally important role to play in training Israel to assume its rightful role as ruler of Canaan. Tales of the Israelites' early history show how unqualified for leadership the sons of Jacob were: The stories of Judah and Tamar (*Gen., ch. 38*) and Dinah and Shechem (*ch. 34*) depict them as irresponsible brigands, unfitted for the task of government. Before they could govern others, they must learn not only to govern themselves, but also to be governed and oppressed by others.

Providence, thus sifting the course of events, brought it about that the almost casual retirement of Jacob's family from Canaan became a semi-permanent exile and a long deferment of the fulfillment of the promise. This sequence of circumstances turns upon the career of one man—Joseph.

Joseph, the Instrument of God

There are several ways of looking at the story of Joseph. One is to consider it as the romantic history of a nobody who became great; the world's literature is full of stories that develop this popular theme. Involved in this treatment is the idealizing of Joseph into almost superhuman stature. The other patriarchs are full-blooded human beings; but Joseph, as he is seen here, is practically sinless, except for a sort of naïve pride. For later Israel, Joseph became an ideal figure, above the common run of man.

A second and perhaps more rewarding approach to the story of Joseph is to study how the tangled events of his career served to mold the character of this spoiled darling into the

strong man who could save a nation. Each event, intended for evil by those responsible, serves not only to advance Joseph on his way but also to strengthen his character through adversity and suffering. Since, humanly speaking, the plot of the story turns on Joseph's forgiveness of his brothers and the ensuing reconciliation (just as in the case of Jacob and Esau), it is very important to recognize the remarkable change in Joseph, who has grown up from an obnoxious, self-centered child into a man of mature understanding and deep compassion.

But the Biblical writer chooses a third way of looking at Joseph's story. God is the chief actor in the drama; Joseph is an instrument through which God will work his plan for Israel. Inevitably, of course, the story tells much about the development of Joseph's character. But from the very beginning we see that Joseph is important to history only because he was important to God and to the divine plan.

Joseph was no paragon of virtue; he would take a lot of molding before God could use him for his purposes. The initial picture we have of Joseph is not a favorable one. He is the typical spoiled child—the thoughtless and inconsiderate younger son who is despised by his older brothers. And naturally pride and boasting produce jealousy and hatred in the house of Jacob. This rupture between brothers was not the doing of God, but was rather an event out of which God was able to accomplish his purpose.

In dealing with the initial plot against Joseph, within the general framework of human motives and actions, God was able to divert the original murder plan into a compromise scheme for selling him into slavery. Thus, out of a brutal and cruel act God brought something good. God would have wished that his plan might be realized through righteous means; but since his people chose to be spiteful and cruel, God had to work with an act of human depravity in order to accomplish his good purpose.

Providence does not cut across human initiative and responsibility. In the story of Joseph we do not meet violent supernatural intervention overriding human plans and actions. Rather, we see the operation of the divine Spirit within the sphere of human responsibility, influencing decisions and bringing about results. The brothers, in their desire to do evil to

(Continued on page 66)

Questions for Discussion

1. How does divine Providence operate in human affairs? Cite examples in the Joseph story, from the Bible, history, and your own experience.
2. How does the story of Joseph fit into the general purpose of God as revealed in the Old Testament?
3. Consider the incidents of Joseph's life as they are related to the molding of his character into a suitable instrument for God.
4. What part do Joseph's brothers play in the plan of divine Providence?
5. Compare Joseph with other heroes of the faith—Moses, Daniel, Jeremiah, Jesus. In what way did God bring good out of the evil inflicted on these men?
6. In what ways does the plan of God depend on the co-operation of men? If God brings good out of evil, what difference does it make whether men do good or evil?

Lesson 4—ISRAEL IN BONDAGE

(The Hebrews in Slavery)

To most Christians today, the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt is just another incident in the tangled history of an ancient and unimportant people, vaguely related in some obscure fashion to the doctrine and faith of the Church. Few appreciate the tremendous forces that figured in the account and that had such decisive force in shaping the future nation. The Exodus was not simply the flight of a comparative handful of people from an intolerable situation; it formed a vital part of the overriding plan of God by which a people was to be chosen, trained, and equipped to be the instrument of his salvation.

In this lesson, first, we are to examine the background of the book of Exodus—the predicament in which Israel found itself in Egypt. On one hand are the factors responsible for the situation, and on the other, the concern of God for the nation. Secondly, we are to study the application of this lesson to God's concern for the Christian Church and its message for the world of today.

A Slaying in the Sands

The broiling sun beat down upon a scene of stark brutality. With a muttered oath the stern taskmaster strode menacingly across the glade by the river's bank toward the kneeling figure of a man clad only in the tattered garments of a slave. The overseer's countenance darkened as he watched the furtive movements by which the slave was desperately trying to collect the few unbroken bricks from a mass of broken pieces. This assorted debris was all that was left of the original precious load—the result of an accident in which the slave, having tripped over a stone, had pitched headlong on the sandy soil.

In the distance could be heard the murmur of men's voices, punctuated by short barks of command as other overseers relentlessly drove other slaves at their work. The walls and towers of a great new city rose in the background, the massive gates still in the early stages of construction. Here was the reason why Pharaoh had insisted that the slaves' working day be lengthened from an hour before dawn to an hour after dusk and that the output of bricks per man be doubled.

But a third man was involved in the tableau on the sand. Unobserved by either the fallen slave or the taskmaster, a young man in the rich garments of an Egyptian nobleman stood half concealed in the low bushes at the far side of the glade. He seemed

ken by conflicting emotions as he tched the taskmaster's whip curl- about the ears of the unfortunate n on the ground. A dozen times nobleman started forward as if to ervene, but each time he drew k, undecided.

At last the overseer tossed away whip in disgust and seized the ne that had been the cause of it all. th one savage sweep of arm and ne, he caught the slave full on the nd, and he dropped unconscious to ground.

As the taskmaster contemptuously ked aside the fallen body, the bleman could stand it no longer. vast and terrible rage took posses- n of him. With a hurried glance right and left, to make sure the lated glade was still unobserved, he shed from his hiding place and isped the startled assailant by the oat. One blow knocked the over- r to the ground. His fury out of all ntrol, the nobleman picked up the me stone that had felled the slave d brought it down with all his ength upon the head of the stunned erseer. The man jerked under the pact and then lay still.

Quickly the nobleman grasped the dy of the dead overseer, dragged it to the bushes, and covered it with nes and dirt. With a hurried glance the slave to make sure that he was ill unconscious, the young Egyptian rried away, his deadly work appar- tly observed only by the unseeing n.

The Predicament of Israel

This lurid tale of brutality and urder is not taken from a detective ory magazine, but is based upon a ory in the book of Exodus (*ch. 2: 1, 12*). It played a vital part in the story of Israel and the role that ation was to have in God's purpose.

All the factors that made terrible ne bondage of Israel are represented this incident. The three actors in ne drama of "murder in the sands" epresent the three important ele- ents in the drama of the Exodus.

The master. The slain overseer as typical of the Egyptian over- ords. He was a member of a proud eople, who actually had little to fear rom any small group like the sons of acob and their descendants. Egypt, n the world of 1299-1232 B.C., was t an apex of power. The empire of he Pharaohs at this time included Nubia to the south and Canaan and southern Syria to the north. And in the Delta of the Nile was located the strategic center of the empire, controlling the sea and military and caravan routes from Asia to Africa.

The Pharaohs of the Nineteenth Dynasty built their capital, Rameses (*Ex. 1: 11*), in the northeast corner of the Delta. In its time it was the mightiest city in the world. Travelers and traders came from every land; tribute and booty poured in from defeated nations, filling the royal treasuries. Great was the wealth and majesty of Egypt in the reigns of Sethi I and Ramesses II. Ramesses II was the leading figure of his age. He reigned longer than most men lived—sixty-seven years. He was a warrior and statesman of the first rank. He celebrated his prowess continually, leaving monuments to his greatness in every province of the empire. He built, rebuilt, and finished palaces and temples without number, even whole cities to glorify himself.

Someone must provide the bone and sinew for such a mighty program of public works. To the Pharaohs of the Nineteenth Dynasty the answer lay close at hand. A plentiful labor supply was to be had in the nearby district of Goshen. Here were the Hebrews, descendants of those nomads who had come down into Egypt generations before, still alien to Egyptian ways, living among themselves and enjoying a disturbing freedom of activity in close proximity to the capital. Minorities always make despotic majorities uneasy; the Pharaohs pounced on this manpower. By subjecting them to slavery the Egyptians could choke off any threat to the stability of the kingdom from these liberty-loving shepherds. From this initial move it was only a step to imposing the worst burdens of slavery upon the suffering people of God.

The slave. The man whose beating touched off the murder symbolized his people: Israel under the lash. It had been many years since Joseph and his brothers had found a ready welcome in the land of the Pharaohs; the situation had worsened immeasurably for their children.

The Israelites were the object of a strange dual policy on the part of Egypt. On the one hand, they were valued as a source of labor for public projects; on the other, they were

The Scripture Lesson for October 28

Scripture: *Ex., chs. 1; 2*

The Printed Text: *Ex. 1: 7-14; 2: 23-25*

(American Standard Version)

Ex. 1: 7 And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them.

8 Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who knew not Joseph. *9* And he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we: *10* come, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there falleth out any war, they also join themselves unto our enemies, and fight against us, and get them up out of the land. *11* Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh storecities, Pithom and Raamses. *12* But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and the more they spread abroad. And they were grieved because of the children of Israel. *13* And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigor: *14* and they made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field, all their service, wherein they made them serve with rigor.

* * * * *

Ch. 2: 23 And it came to pass in the course of those many days, that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. *24* And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. *25* And God saw the children of Israel, and God took knowledge *of them.*

feared as a threat to the nation in case of war. The possibility of using them as a buffer against invading forces was not overlooked, but this involved the risk that they might desert to the enemy someday. So the Pharaohs embarked upon a brutal experiment—to see how far the people of Israel could be bent by barbarous treatment without being broken as individual laborers.

To this end, various repressive measures were instituted. The ruthless murder of newborn Israelite boys was ordered, in order to prevent undue increase in numbers. The Israelites were given no more to eat than was necessary to keep them at their heavy work. And the work itself was made intolerable by drastic changes in working conditions.

The stranger. The Egyptian nobleman who defended the Israelite slave was the third important factor in the drama of death in the sand. Every Israelite knew his story well, for he became the man who was to lead the nation out of its bondage and to the very edge of the Promised Land.

This Egyptian who was not an Egyptian is the hero of Old Testament history. Out of the slaying in the sands God brought forth his mighty deeds—the deliverance of Israel from Egypt and the founding of the nation at Sinai. Who was he? The stranger in Egyptian garb was actually an Israelite, one who through a remarkable chain of circumstances escaped death under the Pharaoh's order. Furthermore, according to tradition, he was reared by Pharaoh's own daughter. Even his name was Egyptian—Moses. Yet he never forgot his own people. It was this loyalty which involved him in murder.

With the slaying a new way of life began for Moses. As a result he was forced to flee into Midian, to make his home there in the vastness of the desert, where God was to speak to him and later to send him out to be the agent of his people's deliverance.

The concern of God. There is another factor in the picture not yet touched upon. Permeating and controlling the situation is the Spirit of God. The God who had brought Abraham out of Mesopotamia, who had sent Jacob and his children to Egypt, would not abandon his people there. When they cried out in their sorrow, he listened. The God who had delivered the patriarchs was a God with tender compassion for his people. And if they now were oppressed and suffering terribly at the hands of a tyrant, he did not intend nor would he permit that situation to continue indefinitely. Someday soon God would bring Israel out of bondage into a new life and, through it, fulfill his purposes in the world.

In the end, the salvation of Israel was rooted in the concern of God and the compassion he had for the Israelites—the oppressed and despised of the earth in their time. This becomes a sign and warranty of his unfailing and trustworthy interest in the welfare of men, especially those who are in trouble and are suffering at the hands of their fellows.

God and the Lowly

The concern of God for the lowly, the enslaved, the downtrodden, has always been the same. In the book of Exodus, in the Prophets, in fact, throughout the Old and New Testaments, it is revealed as an attitude of love and infinite compassion. God does not rest while his children suffer, but works mightily to release and redeem them. This activity finds its fruition in the work of Jesus Christ and the establishment of the Kingdom of God.

To Israel, God's concern was expressed in two ways: release from bondage and spiritual re-creation in the revelation of new truth, and the dedication of the people to their God and his service. First there was *the promise of freedom from slavery*. The situation in which Israel lived was to be greatly changed for the better. Without this, the concern, compassion, and promises would be cruel mockery. Establishing the nation meant a fuller, richer life for Israel here and now.

In our day we don't have to look far to find victims of oppression like the Israelites in Egypt. There are millions of sufferers—poverty-stricken, persecuted, enslaved—in the world today—in Asia, in Africa, in the United States. The message of these passages in Exodus is that the God of Israel is the God of the poor and lowly, of the slave and the homeless wanderer—not only of one nation and one era, but of all peoples and all times. Just as he delivered Israel in his mercy, so he will hear all those who cry out to him in their distress. This assurance is the abiding truth of Biblical faith.

Hand in hand with material improvement goes *spiritual renewal*. "The poor" are always promised more than freedom from their want and poverty. They are offered the riches of fellowship with God, forgiveness from their sins, the fulfillment of their souls' sincere desires. His people will cry, and the Lord "will deliver them out of their distresses."

So the lesson today is not only the story of Israel's predicament, which is the predicament of man. It is mainly the story of the unlimited concern of God and the guarantee of his intervention in behalf of his people. As in the Exodus a permanent promise was made to the world that God will listen to the cry of the oppressed and bring them to freedom, so in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that promise was confirmed for the realm of the spirit.

Questions for Discussion

1. What nations hold in the world today the position that Egypt held in the ancient world? Why is it easy for a strong nation to become despotic? What are the responsibilities of those who exercise great power in society today?
2. What situations today are similar to the predicament of Israel in bondage? Consider tense racial situations at home and in South Africa, and the condition of other oppressed peoples in the world today like the Protestants in Spain and South America.
3. Discuss the moral issue raised by Moses' murder of the Egyptian. What are the factors involved? What was Moses' motivation? How was the act itself carried out? Was it justified? Analyze the character of Moses as it is shown in this incident.
4. What is the attitude of God toward the lowly and oppressed? How do we know that God is concerned with the plight of these people?
5. Concerning the predicament of the downtrodden in the world of today, what ought to be our attitude toward these people? What ought we to do about it, as individuals, as a church, as a nation?

Lesson 5—WHEN MAN MEETS GOD

(God Reveals Himself to Moses)

The call of God to man is always the same. Although the Father may choose different ways of approach to fit the character and background the individual involved, the essential characteristics of the summons to ine service remain constant. To Moses, God spoke from a burning bush; Jeremiah he spoke through the inner consciousness; to Paul, in a blinding sh of light. But the essential characteristics are the same.

The call of Moses, like that of Jeremiah and Paul, is especially significant that its consequences extended far beyond the individual man and affected e people as a whole. Moses was called not merely as an individual, but also an intermediary between God and his people.

oses in the Wilderness

The Israelite storytellers of later ys delighted to trace the series of cidents by which Moses was led p by step to a position where he uld serve as God's instrument in e deliverance of the nation from ndage. They saw the hand of God in e preservation of the life of the in- nt Moses when so many other Is- elite children were being destroyed. ne providence of God gained for him e educational advantages of the gyptian court, and then involved m in difficulties so that he could no nger continue in the comfortable life the palace.

When Moses was forced to flee into e desert as a result of the murder had committed, he did not realize at he was once and for all casting s lot with his own oppressed people. he years he spent as a shepherd in idian, which might have seemed asted time for so great a future ader, were actually a period when l his powers were being brought to eir necessary maturity. He had no ay of knowing he was entering upon e final stage of preparation for his ework.

The desert was particularly suited r the preparation of Moses to meet s God. Here he underwent the same gorous training of life in the open at helped to produce other leaders f God's people, like Elijah and mos. Wild and lonely, the very still- ess of the desert afforded him an pportunity for spiritual contempla- on and reflection. (Dorothy Clarke Vilson's novel, *Prince of Egypt* [The Westminster Press; $3.50], gives an xcellent description of the geography f the desert, details of the life lived here, and its psychological effect pon the man.)

His Qualifications for Leadership

Thus the providence of God provided in Moses an ideal leader for the work of setting Israel free. His early history, his education among the Egyptians, his more recent history as an outcast on behalf of his people—all of these were indications of potential leadership. Although he was an Israelite, he was well acquainted with the customs and character of the Egyptians. He was a free man, not a slave rising to lead other slaves. Furthermore, he was a cautious man. In his conversations with God he weighed every possibility, considered each problem that might arise, offered every conceivable objection, so that his doubts might be resolved before the task was undertaken.

Such caution is not unpleasing to God; for it is essential that his servant be intelligently prepared to carry out the plans of God, just as it is important that all objections be settled before the call is accepted. But once Moses has made his decision, there can be no turning back. God does not force his will upon anyone; but once the call is accepted, he demands complete and unswerving loyalty from all.

The Form of God's Call

The form of God's call to Moses fits into the invariable pattern: (1) God reveals himself. To Moses he appeared in the burning bush, disclosing himself as the God of his fathers—of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. (2) Once his identity is established, God announces his purpose. He will deliver his people from bondage, create a nation out of them, and bring them into the land promised to their fathers. (3) Then he reveals the individual's part in the plan. Moses is to be the intermediary, the contact between God and the people. He is to carry the word of God to Israel and to perform God's will, leading the people forth. (4) Finally, through logic and persuasion, God overcomes a man's objections to the call. At the same time he gives further details in regard to the work to be done.

But God is never dictatorial; his summons is not forced on anyone. Many are called, but few respond, and so few are chosen. Unless a man, having weighed the call with all its difficulties, is willing to respond in spite of these things, he cannot be chosen. God does not use coercion in securing servants for his Kingdom.

The Response of Moses

The first response Moses makes to the strange phenomenon of the burning bush is one of curiosity. The bush burns but is not consumed. Moses approaches to investigate, and his curiosity turns to fright. He is awestruck. For out of the bush God speaks to him. Then he is beset by doubts. He does not question that it is God who has sought him out, but he doubts his own ability. He considers the magnitude of his task: to rescue a nation of slaves, to lead them away from their masters, to be the mainstay of a whole people—and all this despite the fact that he himself is an outcast, an outlaw in the land of Egypt. His courage falters. He expresses his doubts in his questions to God; his feelings are similar to the hesitation that Jonah displayed and to the doubts that perplexed Thomas.

1. How will his people believe? They will not listen to him, he tells God. Moses considers himself a poor choice for a leader. He is a fugitive from Egyptian justice; he is a stranger who has never been intimate with his people and who comes forward with an unbelievable message. But God says, "I will be with thee."

Furthermore, God's commission will be confirmed by events. When Moses has accomplished his task, when Israel has been brought out of Egypt, the nation will be brought to this same mountain to serve God. God thus flatly assumes that the deliver-

ance is already accomplished. Moses cannot but be encouraged by the confidence expressed in God's words.

2. Again, Moses fears that the Israelites will not trust his word that God has sent him, that their escape is part of God's plan. How can he persuade them that his commission comes from a divine source? First of all, the people will demand to know the name of the deity who has set out to help them. This point is no mere trifle; for the people of antiquity felt that a name was not simply a label by which a person was known, but rather a symbol that conveyed the nature and character of the man. If they are to know God properly, to pray to him, to invoke his power and help, they must, of course, know his personal name.

The same reasoning applies also to Moses. Before he can accept his task, he must know the name of his sponsor, the one under whose orders he is soon to be acting. Therefore, in *Ex. 3: 14, 15,* God tells Moses his name: "I AM THAT I AM." However, the name is also given in a shorter form in *v. 14,* "I AM." This name in the Hebrew was pronounced as Yahweh, which probably means, "He who causes to be," "He who brings into existence," "He creates." The personal name of God, therefore, affirms that he is the Creator, the one who has brought the universe into existence.

3. But Moses further objects that the people will refuse to listen to him, doubting that the Lord has appeared to him. In reply, God teaches him what may seem to us nothing more than a number of magical tricks. To a more sophisticated group these signs might seem rather thin proof, but to a nation of slaves, unlettered and naïve, they would be sufficient. Thus God arms Moses with devices that fit into the mental and social framework of the people with whom, from now on, he is to deal.

4. Moses objects that he is not a public speaker. How can he win the people over when he not only is no orator but also has a speech defect? To God this is not a valid objection, but rather a last resort, an attempt at procrastination to disguise Moses' unwillingness. Compare Moses' excuse with Jeremiah's complaint that he is too young to be a prophet (*Jer. 1: 6-8*). The implication of such a reply is that God does not know what he is doing, that he has made a poor choice in selecting a man unfit for the task. It is an artificial excuse, designed to put off the moment of decision. If Jeremiah is old enough to appreciate the call, he is old enough to carry it out. In like fashion, if Moses can argue *with God,* certainly he can argue *for* him. Nevertheless, to give Moses additional assurance, God adds Aaron, Moses' brother, to the party to be the official spokesman. God will speak with Moses; Aaron will act as Moses' tongue to relay the word to the people.

Finally, then, Moses agrees. Despite his unwillingness and excuses, once committed, he remains faithful to the task. With unswerving devotion he carries out the will of God, permitting nothing thereafter to interfere in any way with his relationship to God: Moses the servant and God his master.

God's Call Today

Fundamentally, God's call today comes to men in the same way. God calls every man and has a place for every man in his work. For the Christian the call comes through confrontation with Jesus Christ, expressed in somewhat different words but conveying the same idea: "If any man would come after me, let him deny

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The Scripture Lesson for November 4

Scripture: *Ex., chs. 3; 4*

The Printed Text: *Ex. 3: 1-15*

(American Standard Version)

Ex. 3: 1 Now Moses was keeping the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the back of the wilderness, and came to the mountain of God, unto Horeb. *2* And the angel of Jehovah appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. *3* And Moses said, I will turn aside now, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. *4* And when Jehovah saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I. *5* And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. *6* Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God. *7* And Jehovah said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people that are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; *8* and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Amorite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite. *9* And now, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: moreover I have seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. *10* Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt. *11* And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt? *12* And he said, Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be the token unto thee, that I have sent thee: when thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.

13 And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? *14* And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you. *15* And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, Jehovah, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.

Questions for Discussion

1. Consider some of the important calls of the Bible: for example, the call of Jeremiah (*Jer., ch. 1*); of Isaiah (*Isa., ch. 6*); of Ezekiel (*Ezek., chs. 1 to 3*); of Paul (*Acts 22: 1-11*). Do they follow the pattern of the call to Moses?

2. List the objections of Moses. Are they similar to objections we make when God calls us to a particular task? How does God overcome them with us?

3. How may we hear the call of God today? What part do Bible study, Christian worship, the advice of Christian friends, play in hearing this call?

self, take up his cross, and follow ' (*Mark 8: 34*). Our response must o that call, however it comes and ever it is expressed.

he nature of the call may vary. nay be dramatic, like the burning h or the blinding light on the road Damascus; or it may be an inner light, discernible only to the eyes of the spirit. Man may discover that God appears not only in the violent upheavals of nature but also, as he did to Elijah, in the quiet of the heart.

Let us review the form of God's call to Moses and see how it applies to God's call to men today: (1) God makes himself known. This he has done in Jesus Christ. When we recognize that Christ is God and therefore our Lord and Saviour, we have experienced the first step of the call. (2) God reveals his purpose. In Christ his purpose is nothing less than the redemption of the world, the reconciliation of men to himself, the establishing of the Kingdom of God. (3) God reveals *our* part in that plan and purpose. What would he have *us* do? No one can answer that question for anyone else. It is an individual, a personal, question. But each must listen. (4) Then we may object, as Moses did. We are not eloquent; we have this handicap or that. But God will break down our resistance and send us forth to the task he has picked out for us to do.

Lesson 6—"LET MY PEOPLE GO!"

(The People Delivered)

When American Negro slaves heard the Bible read, they felt a close kinship with those slaves of an earlier day—the Israelites in Egypt. ey longed for a Moses to deliver them; and they put their longing into the inting, wistful music of the spiritual, "Let My People Go!" They looked a God who could call down plagues at will, who could carry the oppressed pple dry-shod through the sea, and who could engulf their oppressors in a al wave.

We today cannot relive the deliverance of the Hebrews as vividly as could slaves of a hundred years ago; but we can study this event to learn its nificance in the history of Israel, its meaning for the Christian faith, and message to mankind today. But more important than anything else, we n see the hand of God acting in deliverance, and the Word of God proiming eternal war against tyranny.

he Exodus

From the human point of view, e Exodus is the story of the libera- n of a people. But what makes the ry significant is that Israel's desire freedom was more than a natural man aspiration: it was a longing to im a birthright. And God was in mpathy with this longing. He not ly remembered his people and de- ered them from slavery, but in this llverance he expressed the divine ll for human freedom universally d for all time.

We have thus the two-sided story slaves gaining their independence, gether with the accomplishment of e purpose of God—the proclama- on of an eternal message of hope d the assurance of deliverance from ndage, whatever the direction from nich enslavement comes.

The Freedom Faith

We hear a lot today about freedom; therefore, it is important that we understand the attitude of God toward this quality of life which is both a sacred privilege and a religious doctrine.

The freedom faith has its origin in the creation of man. Man is distinguished from other creatures by this special gift—freedom—in the realm of the will and the mind. Man was created responsible; because he is responsible, he therefore is free. In many ways man is limited by environment and circumstances, but in the area of moral decisions man's freedom is guaranteed by God. However man has disfigured the image of God, he has never completely lost the distinction between right and wrong, the freedom to choose between what is pleasing and what is displeasing in the sight of God.

This God-given freedom remains a central element in the faith of the Bible. It is never restricted or impaired by God himself. Nor is it the intention of the Lord that this freedom to weigh choices, study evidence, make decisions and follow them, should ever be removed or restricted by men. If God has always been careful never to overstep this area of human responsibility and freedom, how much more ought men never to interfere with the liberty of others! Man must be left free to exercise judgment, to pursue truth without impediment, and to offer his obedience and service to God; any restriction of this liberty by coercion or other forms of control violates the essential will of God for man. Tyranny of any kind and in any form is objectionable to God.

The Revolt Against Tyranny

Tyranny never comes piecemeal: it is potentially total in character. There is no such thing as a bit of tyranny. The more power it secures, the more power it needs and wants. Tyranny involves the whole man; it results in the enslavement of mind, body, and soul. Restrictions anywhere eventually mean restrictions everywhere. This principle can be seen in the imposition of tryanny on Israel at the time of Moses. Politically, the Israel-

ites had no voice in government; economically, they were the victims of a vast exploitation—they received no wages and were forced to work under intolerable conditions; socially, they were outcasts, regarded as unfit to associate with the Egyptians.

At the center of such a condition there is frequently a religious tyranny. Not much is said in the book of Exodus about this phase of the plight of Israel, but it is a deep, underlying factor. Moses asks permission to take the people out in the desert to worship their God (*Ex. 5: 1*); but this is denied by the haughty Pharaoh, who claims divine honors for himself. Behind this decision lies the Egyptian conception of Pharaoh as god. Although we hear nothing of particular beliefs imposed upon Israel, one is threatened here: the acknowledgment of Pharaoh as the supreme authority in all matters—national and domestic, civil and religious. This religious tyranny would deny Israel its right to worship Israel's God.

Just as tyranny creeps through every sphere of life, so revolt inevitably extends into every area where tyranny occurs. Thus the revolt of Moses and his people cannot be classified in any particular category of the quest for freedom, since it involved not only religious freedom but also a general release from the whole of Egyptian oppression.

Historically, the struggle for religious liberty has always brought with it the struggle for social and economic freedom as well. Likewise, the struggle for political independence has often been accompanied by revolt against ecclesiastical tyranny also.

If the story of the Exodus is taken as symbolic of man's desire for freedom and as evidence of God's concern for the same liberty, then it seems clear that tyranny in any form is antireligious in character because it violates the divinely given rights of men. The struggle for liberty is a religious struggle for the recovery of these same rights, though of course the way in which this struggle is conducted may or may not be pleasing to God in any given case. Tyranny is theological heresy; liberty is theological orthodoxy.

The Story of the Revolt

The revolt was touched off by Moses' message to Pharaoh: "Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness." The immediate result of this challenge, however, was the imposition of greater burdens on the people. This follows from the nature of tyranny, for the only response tyranny can make to opposition is to become more tyrannical. It is through this invariable response that tyranny becomes total.

God's reply to the stubbornness of Pharaoh is the series of plagues. The refusal of tyranny to make concessions brings a series of disasters upon the Egyptians. There is a certain natural sequence that can be discerned in the events. An overflowing of the Nile would be followed by large numbers of frogs, mosquitoes, gnats, and the like. What we have here is an arrangement of natural phenomena that may have occurred in close succession and thus produced the remarkable results recorded.

With the end of the ninth plague, Pharaoh is still obstinate, in spite of these blows from nature that were universally interpreted in antiquity as signs of divine displeasure. Despite the accumulation of warnings, the tyrant makes no effort to rectify the situation. As negotiations are broken off, a final warning is given—the slaying of the first-born. What is recorded here is again a natural phenomenon—an epidemic—that killed the Egyptians but spared the Israelites, who lived according to strict laws of sanitation and away from the centers of population.

The close connection between the Passover celebration and the last plague is familiar to all of us. A feast associated with the dedication of the first-born, it naturally became linked in history and worship with the terrible plague in which Israel's first-born were spared. The plague was also the way in which God preserved his first-born nation; so that the Passover came to mark the historic deliverance of the people from bondage and

The Scripture Lesson for November 11

Scripture: *Ex., chs. 5 to 15*

The Printed Text: *Ex. 12: 30, 31; 14: 15-22, 31*

(American Standard Version)

Ex. 12: 30 And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead. *31* And he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up, get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve Jehovah, as ye have said.

* * * * *

Ch. 14: 15 And Jehovah said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward. *16* And lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thy hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go into the midst of the sea on dry ground. *17* And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall go in after them: and I will get me honor upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen. *18* And the Egyptians shall know that I am Jehovah, when I have gotten me honor upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen. *19* And the angel of God, who went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud removed from before them, and stood behind them: *20* and it came between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel; and there was the cloud and the darkness, yet gave it light by night: and the one came not near the other all the night.

21 And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and Jehovah caused the sea to go *back* by a strong east wind all the night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. *22* And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left.

. . . *31* And Israel saw the great work which Jehovah did upon the Egyptians, and the people feared Jehovah: and they believed in Jehovah, and in his servant Moses.

e Independence Day of the nation. ore than this, the Passover is the romise of divine redemption from ondage, not merely political and na- onal, but spiritual as well. And so e Feast becomes the anticipation the Passover of our Lord, through hich deliverance from the bondage sin is effected for all believers.

Questions for Discussion

1. What is freedom of thought, of speech, of press, of religion? Why is God concerned about the preservation of these freedoms?
2. What is the definition of tyranny in the same terms: thought, speech, press, religion? How does God combat such tyranny?
3. Discuss the roles of the principal actors in the revolt. What was the part played by Pharaoh? Moses? God? the people?
4. What is the meaning of the Exodus for today?

he Flight from Egypt

At midnight the Lord had struck own the first-born of Egypt. The lamity had now reached intolerable oportions. Pharaoh finds himself in catastrophic situation. At his wits' nd, he associates the disaster with e presence of the Israelites and their od. He thereupon drives them out of gypt. With this event the Exodus egins and the Israelites flee.

No sooner have they departed, aving the land in peace, than the gyptians regret their actions in let- ng Israel go. Forgotten are the dis- sters and troubles, terrors and fears; ll that remains in mind is the tre- endous economic loss in the release f the Israelites. Once again haraoh's heart changes. He sends an rmy of horses and chariots to over- ake the Israelites. The climactic act f the Exodus takes place in this ritically dangerous situation. The de- enseless people are caught between wampy lakes in front of them and the pursuing Egyptians in the rear.

At this juncture, through the miraculous intervention of God, the Israelites reach the opposite shore and the pursuing Egyptian force is destroyed. Three different accounts of this notable event exist. Two are woven together in the prose narrative of *ch. 14,* and the third is in Moses' song of triumph in *ch. 15.* Despite this diversity in detail, the accounts agree in ascribing to the God of Israel sole responsibility for salvation of the nation.

Thus the story of deliverance culminates in a mighty act of God—a permanent demonstration of his love for his people. Ever afterward, priests and prophets looked back to this event as the most notable happening in the long history of the relationship between God and his people. The Exodus was not a revolution engineered by men, but a deliverance carried out by God.

The Exodus: Its Lesson and Meaning

So God acted in history to deliver his people. The deliverance from Egypt was always cited by the prophets as evidence that God was gracious, that he loved his people. It was a guarantee of God's undying concern for the people, a promise of even greater deliverance to come.

The New Testament saw in the Exodus the symbol of divine deliverance and the anticipation of a new and greater deliverance from the bondage of sin through Jesus Christ offered to all men. As the Exodus had been historical, national, and political, so the new deliverance is spiritual and universal. And as the Exodus had resulted in the foundation of a new nation dedicated to the service of God, so the deliverance in Christ results in the formation of a new world order—the Kingdom of God.

Lesson 7—THE LAW AND THE COVENANT

(Laws for the New Nation)

All the events we have been studying this quarter have crucial significance for the Hebrew nation and consequently for the Christian Church which, through Christ, is the successor to that nation in the plan of God. Last week we considered the escape from Egypt—an event that Jews were forever to look back upon as the supreme evidence of God's love and faithfulness. Now this week we come to the event that formally and officially made the Hebrews, ex-slaves, into a new and a free nation. That event was the establishment of a constitution for the nation. More than that, it was the earthly symbol of a divine act, a sign of God's covenant with his people.

These eternal laws are binding on Christians no less than on Jews. Jesus did not come to replace them; he came to *fulfill* them. His law of love does not abrogate the Ten Commandments; it summarizes them. He who loves God and loves his neighbor will not take the name of God in vain, will not steal or bear false witness, or do any of the other things forbidden in the law that was given on Mt. Sinai.

Next quarter our lessons are on "Jesus and the People"; therefore, today's lesson is not a detailed study of these laws but simply an attempt to comprehend their significance for us.

Moses on the Mountain

A good many Israelites were frankly skeptical of their leader. During the three months they had been slowly moving toward this majestic mountain called Sinai, the Israelites had grown used to seeing the lonely figure of their eccentric leader stride off to some isolated spot and there commune with his God. Usually when he returned, he seemed to have gained new strength, new vigor, and new determination. His orders cleared away at once the difficulties that had perplexed them all; his spirit of quiet confidence swept them into renewed pledges of confidence and cooperation.

But just now Moses had come back with a strange message. In three days' time, he said, God himself would appear to the people and speak words of a new covenant that was to bind the nation to God forever. Moses had insisted that elaborate preparations be made for that day, that all the clothing in camp be freshly laundered, that certain very strict rules of diet and conduct be followed to the letter.

Of course, no one doubted that

Moses was on particularly intimate terms with God. Those strange events in Egypt and at the Red Sea were conclusive proof of that. Now God was to enter into a special contract with the whole nation. The recalcitrants of the camp had been forced to comply in full with Moses' instructions; but they let it be known that, as far as they were concerned, the burden of proof was all upon him.

So it was with mixed feelings that the Children of Israel watched Moses start up the mountain. Some waited in faith and anticipation, some in anxiety and fear, others in doubt and indecision. But over the assembled tribes hung an air of burning curiosity so intense that the entire nation seemed to breathe as one man.

Already the more observing had noticed that today the mountain seemed unusually dark; a violent storm with thunder and lightning appeared to be raging at the summit. A shepherd's horn could be heard in the distance. As Moses' figure grew smaller against the foothills, the mist seemed to grow thick, and vague rumblings were heard as if the spirits of the mountain were shaking themselves from their ages-long sleep. A stir ran through the multitude: this was certainly unusual.

The smoke gathered at the top in a thick cloud. Suddenly the ground rocked beneath their feet. The blare of the ram's horn grew louder and louder. Here and there people fell to the ground in mingled awe and fear.

The doubters mumbled many prayers of anguish and pleading to the God whose servant they had doubted; the believers no longer looked with scorn on the faithless. Every man was filled with a new sense of unity, of purpose, of comradeship with God, of submission to his will.

Even the most skeptical was convinced; God was speaking to his people. Whatever should come out of this meeting of Moses with God, his instructions would be followed to the letter. And from this stand the people were determined they would never waver. Subdued yet exalted, above all tremendously moved and dedicated, Israel waited for the return of its leader from the place where God was.

The Covenant Ratified

We have seen that God began to fulfill his promises to the patriarchs with the deliverance from Egypt, thereby guaranteeing to Israel the ultimate realization of its hopes. Now he has paused with his people at Sinai in order (1) to fit them for the task and responsibilities of nationhood; and (2) to enter into a binding agreement with them, which we call the covenant.

That covenant, represented by two tables of stone, became the constitution of the new nation. With its adoption, God's words to Abraham, "I will make of you a great nation," were fulfilled. The law that Moses brought down from Sinai thus signified the real founding of the nation.

Exactly what kind of state was God creating? Israel was to be a new, different kind of nation, the like of which had never before been seen on the earth. Its foundation was to rest upon three vitally important principles derived from God himself: (1) a basic, binding allegiance to God, as required by the First Commandment (interpreted in accordance with *Deut. 6: 4, 5*); (2) true service to God as a nation, the same as Abraham had rendered to him as an individual; and (3) a dual existence as a model and example for the world and as a missionary for God among the nations. The missionary phase of Israel's obligation would come later in the nation's history; what we are interested in today is the way in which Israel became a model for the world.

The standard of life in God's nation was to be the Ten Commandments and the principles embodied in them. This Decalogue presupposes a devout loyalty to God that is reflected in the words of its introduction: "I am the Lord thy God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slaves." Because personal liberty is thus made the basis for obligation to the conditions of the covenant, a unique sense of the importance of the individual runs through the Commandments.

The Scripture Lesson for November 18

Scripture: *Ex., chs. 18 to 23*

The Printed Text: *Ex. 19: 7, 8; 23: 1-13*

(American Standard Version)

Ex. 19: 7 And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and set before them all these words which Jehovah commanded him. *8* And all the people answered together, and said, All that Jehovah hath spoken we will do. And Moses reported the words of the people unto Jehovah.

* * * * *

Ch. 23: 1 Thou shalt not take up a false report: put not thy hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness. *2* Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to turn aside after a multitude to wrest *justice*: *3* neither shalt thou favor a poor man in his cause.

4 If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. *5* If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, thou shalt forbear to leave him, thou shalt surely release *it* with him.

6 Thou shalt not wrest the justice *due* to thy poor in his cause. *7* Keep thee far from a false matter; and the innocent and righteous slay thou not: for I will not justify the wicked. *8* And thou shalt take no bribe: for a bribe blindeth them that have sight, and perverteth the words of the righteous. *9* And a sojourner shalt thou not oppress: for ye know the heart of a sojourner, seeing ye were sojourners in the land of Egypt.

10 And six years thou shalt sow thy land, and shalt gather in the increase thereof: *11* but the seventh year thou shalt let it rest and lie fallow, that the poor of thy people may eat: and what they leave the beast of the field shall eat. In like manner thou shalt deal with thy vineyard, *and* with thy olive-yard. *12* Six days thou shalt do thy work, and on the seventh day thou shalt rest; that thine ox and thine ass may have rest, and the son of thy handmaid, and the sojourner, may be refreshed. *13* And in all things that I have said unto you take ye heed: and make no mention of the name of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth.

Questions for Discussion

1. How was the promise to Abraham fulfilled at Sinai? Trace the story of the covenant from the promise to Abraham to the fulfillment at Sinai.
2. Compare the Commandments with some of the detailed regulations in the Book of the Covenant. Indicate the permanent and temporary features of these laws.
3. What is the practical effect of realizing that we who are the people of the new covenant have countrymen all over the world? What binds us to them? How does this tie affect our attitude toward them?

The covenant stressed the liberty and equality of every man under the lordship of God. Even in property rights this divine priority is recognized: property is conceived of as belonging entirely to God. The deep sense of communion that binds Israelites together exists because they are first bound to God.

Because all are adopted sons of God, each is brother to his neighbor. The covenant binding them to God binds them to each other because they are responsible to God as a group. The violation of one becomes the violation of all. Their adherence to this covenant is the only way in which they can fulfill their role as a nation in the plan of God.

The actual ceremony of ratification described in *Ex., ch. 24*. In a solemn ceremony Israel here takes upon itself by free decision the requirements of the covenant and adopts as its own the plan of God.

God has now revealed himself to be a faithful, reliable, and true protector of the people, as one who has bound himself to the nation and is the guarantor of its welfare. Israel, on its part, will be a submissive and faithful servant. Thus the covenant is established, and the new nation is born.

The Laws of the Covenant

The laws of the covenant as outlined in *Ex. 20: 1-17* and interpreted in the Book of the Covenant (*chs. 20: 22 to 23: 33*) represent a mingling of two things: (1) the divinely ordained, eternally valid, absolute principles of universal truth for human life; and (2) factors of local circumstance, temporal condition, and human frailty. Because this second condition prevails, the laws occasionally include a deliberate compromise. Here was a confederacy of tribes, changing from a nomadic society to settled occupation of the Holy Land. In the presentation of the laws in Exodus no sharp line is drawn between locally conditioned laws applicable to this time of transition and those underlying principles of God which apply beyond the nation and its time to all peoples. Therefore, in dealing with the Ten Commandments and the other laws, we must recognize the combination of these elements.

No human society could long endure without a number of laws represented in the Decalogue (i.e., against theft, adultery, murder, etc.), for they are laws arising from human experience and the necessities of community life. But the Commandments represent more than a simple sanction of what had been the prevailing social custom. They are laws of God and expressions of his judgment upon sin, and to break them is to go contrary to God's commands and to be in deliberate rebellion against God.

Its Relevance for Today

The relevance of the covenant and the laws for today lies in this: The principles underlying Israel's constitution apply to every nation. What God wanted in Israel was a model for, and messenger to, the nations, a people to be his special servants, through whom redemption was to come and the Kingdom be founded. And this is what he wants today of those nations which have received the Christian gospel and are ostensibly dedicated to obeying his will. Just as Israel was a covenant nation under the will of God, so any nation today, founded on the same principles of individual liberty and community responsibility to God, is bound by the law and a partner in God's covenant.

In the deepest sense, however, God does not make his covenant with any political group. He makes it with a

(Continued on page 61)

Lesson 8—THE PEOPLE WORSHIP GOD

(The People at Worship)

Lessons 8-13 are written by the editors

The subject of worship has been strongly emphasized in CROSSROADS since this magazine appeared a year ago. We have had an article on worship in each issue, a unit of six *Christian Faith and Life* lessons this past quarter on this theme, and at least one Uniform lesson devoted entirely to it (the one for November 19, 1950). It is, of course, pure coincidence that this lesson on the subject should occur just a year later; but the fact of the matter is that the subject of worship occupies a large place in Scripture.

One of the most extensive presentations of the subject is before us in this lesson: thirteen chapters from the book of Exodus. Careful study of this material leads us to three convictions about worship:

1. Public worship, done decently and in order, is important to God.
2. Public worship is an appointed time in which God offers to reveal himself to his people.
3. The logical outcome of the public worship of God is the self-offering of God's people.

Let us consider these matters together.

God Wants Us to Worship

When we talk about worship in this lesson, we are referring to *congregational public worship*. Personal and private worship is, of course, an important aspect of devotional life; but that is not what our Scripture is about in this lesson.

Now, congregational worship is treated rather extensively in Scripture. This fact is impressive evidence for its justification. Yet the convincing argument can hardly be a quantitative one. Worship is important and necessary because of what worship is.

It is man's response to what God has done for him. To the Hebrews at Sinai it was their response to what God had done for them: he had brought them "out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage"; he had established a covenant with them, making them his special people. In gratitude, then, they built the Tabernacle to his glory and as the place where they could continue to make their offering to him. To Christians, the worship of the church has even deeper meaning, for God has done something for us *in Jesus Christ*. We, therefore, respond to *that* gift with our adoration and our offering. Obviously, worship is of supreme importance when viewed in that light. The person for whom it is of little consequence is either someone who does not know what worship is or someone who does not recognize what God has done for him in Christ.

It may perhaps be argued that we do not need to make this response in *public* worship. Is not gratitude to God uttered in the privacy of one's own prayer closet enough? But the Hebrew knew that he was not saved from Egypt because God had a destiny for him as an individual. His part in God's plan for the world would be fulfilled only as he functioned in the nation. And the Christian knows that he has not been saved in order to fulfill an individual destiny. He does God's work as part of the church—the community through which Christ is mediated to the world. It was the gratitude and self-offering of the Hebrew nation that God wanted to receive in worship, as it is today the thanksgiving and sacrifice of the church that he is pleased to hear and to accept.

"Decently and in Order"

The elaborate ritual of the Hebrews does not concern us now. We Protestants believe that Christ brought a new simplicity to our worship. The law does not need to be engraved on stone and carried in an Ark; it has already been engraved in our hearts. The Temple does not need to be elaborate; God can be worshiped "in spirit and in truth." The sacrifice does not need a table; the priests do not need costly vestments or special places to wash their hands; once for all the sacrifice has been made, on a cross. What we come now to do is to offer the sacrifice of ourselves.

But the principle underlying the care with which God instructed the Hebrews in the building of their Temple remains valid. It was expressed by Paul in these words: "Let all things be done decently and in order" (*I Cor. 14: 40*). With all its simplicity, God wants our worship to be carefully and reverently done.

This means that any service of worship should be logically planned and thoughtfully conducted. It means that every person participating in worship should know what he is doing and why he is doing it. Why do we come to worship? To meet friends, to listen to a discourse, to enjoy singing, to receive inspiration? None of these are good primary motives. We come to thank God for what he has done for us, to confess our unworthiness of his mercy, to receive his grace, to hear his Word, and to offer ourselves for his service. All worship should be planned and participated in, so that these motives may be fulfilled, God working his good grace among all of us.

God Reveals Himself in Worship

Our second conviction, growing out of the study of this Scripture from Exodus, is that God makes himself known to his people when they meet together for public worship. The Tabernacle of the Hebrews was called "tent of the congregation" (*Ex. 39: 32*), the place where the people came together to see God's glory and to hear his words to them.

How does God make himself known to Christian people today? There is a widespread idea that since God's glory is everywhere—in nature, in great art, in literature, in noble souls, in music—he can be known anywhere if a man seeks after him to find him. This idea has always been popular in non-Christian religions and among philosophers like Emerson, and romanticists like Keats and Wordsworth. So this latter poet could write, in "Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tin-

The Scripture Lesson for November 25

Scripture: *Ex., chs. 25 to 31; 35 to 40*

The Printed Text: *Ex. 29: 43-46; 35: 21-29*

(American Standard Version)

Ex. 29: 43 And there I will meet with the children of Israel; and *the Tent* shall be sanctified by my glory. *44* And I will sanctify the tent of meeting, and the altar: Aaron also and his sons will I sanctify, to minister to me in the priest's office. *45* And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God. *46* And they shall know that I am Jehovah their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I might dwell among them: I am Jehovah their God.

* * * * *

Ch. 35: 21 And they came, every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing, *and* brought Jehovah's offering, for the work of the tent of meeting, and for all the service thereof, and for the holy garments. *22* And they came, both men and women, as many as were willing-hearted, *and* brought brooches, and ear-rings, and signet-rings, and armlets, all jewels of gold; even every man that offered an offering of gold unto Jehovah. *23* And every man, with whom was found blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' *hair*, and rams' skins dyed red, and sealskins, brought them. *24* Every one that did offer an offering of silver and brass brought Jehovah's offering; and every man, with whom was found acacia wood for any work of the service, brought it. *25* And all the women that were wise-hearted did spin with their hands, and brought that which they had spun, the blue, and the purple, the scarlet, and the fine linen. *26* And all the women whose heart stirred them up in wisdom spun the goats' *hair*. *27* And the rulers brought the onyx stones, and the stones to be set, for the ephod, and for the breastplate; *28* and the spice, and the oil; for the light, and for the anointing oil, and for the sweet incense. *29* The children of Israel brought a freewill offering unto Jehovah; every man and woman, whose heart made them willing to bring for all the work, which Jehovah had commanded to be made by Moses.

Questions for Discussion

1. What is the danger of rigid, formal laws for the worship of God? What is the danger of loose, informal, haphazard, and unplanned worship?

2. Why do we say that the church and its worship is *the* place where God reveals himself to men? What is wrong with worshiping God in nature?

3. Do most of the people you know in the church seem to have the right understanding of the place of the offering in Christian worship? Do you agree that a person's understanding of the offering may be a key to his understanding of the Christian life?

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In Christ, God has taken up his velling among us in a new taber-acle. And this fact must, of course, ways be central to our worship if God to reveal himself to us in his hurch.

Self-offering

Returning now to our Scripture lesson and the building of the place of worship at Sinai, we are struck with a third observation: the Tabernacle was built by the willing sacrifice and self-offering of the people. "And they came, every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing, and they brought the Lord's offering to the work of the tabernacle of the congregation, and for all his service, and for the holy garments." (*Ex. 35:21.*) These Hebrews were ordinary folk. In fact, they could be quite forgetful of God and failing in their faith, as we shall see in next week's lesson. But when Moses came to them with the demand of God for their sacrifice and offering, they responded generously and joyfully. And God's glory filled the Tabernacle, not just because it was beautiful and well-constructed, but because of the spirit of the people in the building of it.

It is certainly a law of life that we appreciate what we are called upon to do if it has cost us something to do it. So the people could appreciate the Tabernacle because it was the fruit of their labors. But it is also a law of worship that when we behold the glory of God and receive the gift of his love, we are impelled to offer ourselves for his service. Israel's gifts to the building of the Tabernacle signified that its people accepted their destiny of being God's chosen people. They did not comprehend what that destiny would involve. They could not foresee the years of discipline, of punishment, of strict moral living in a world with loose and easy standards, of warfare, of exile and bondage. But they gave God their lives, to be used as he needed them. This was the logical outcome of their worship.

Similarly, a Christian does not know what it will cost him to accept the destiny of being Christ's man. Under the influence of worship, when God is so much in the midst, a Christian man feels confident as he replies to God's "Whom shall I send?" with "Here am I; send me." He feels this is what he *must* do. God has graciously "pitched his tent" in the company of his people. He has brought the Christian pilgrim out of the Egypt of his separation, the bondage of his sin. He has ushered him from darkness into light. What can the Christian do in gratitude but offer himself to be used by his Lord? This is the logical outcome of all Christian worship everywhere.

In our Presbyterian worship this sacrifice of ourselves for God's service is represented by the "offering." But how do most people feel about this part of the service? It may well be that their understanding of the offering is a touchstone to their understanding of worship, and, indeed, of the whole Christian life.

In the best view of the matter, it is the gift of ourselves to God, the presentation of the "living sacrifice" that Paul speaks of in *Rom. 12:1.* The money we give represents ourselves. The prayer made at the Communion service could rightfully be made every time the offering is received: "And here we offer and present unto Thee ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice." In fact, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper provides the norm for all worship. We commemorate God's gift of himself in Christ, and in return for that gift we give him ourselves.

Lesson 7—The Law and the Covenant

(Continued from page 59)

people, and these people might live in a democracy, a socialist state, or a communistic country. They are not unified by race or blood. They are unified by one thing only: their call from Christ to be his people. In these days the people of the new covenant who live in the United States should pray daily for their countrymen-in-Christ who live in China, Russia, Indonesia, France, England, around the world. Together we are the Church Universal, the communion of saints, and there is no barrier of time, space, or politics which that common bond does not and cannot transcend.

Lesson 9—REBELLION AGAINST THE LORD

(A Doubting and Disobedient People)

In one of his letters the late Maxwell Perkins, book editor for the publishing firm of Charles Scribner's Sons, speaks of "the two consciences" that every author must have. "One of them is the one we all have, but the writer, the artist, has another which compels him in the same way not to shrink from revealing life, however unpleasant it is, and however offensive his writing to important elements in the public. He is often looked upon as being immoral on account of the frankness of his expression, or the material he uses, when he would regard himself as immoral if he softened his words or misrepresented his material to conform to the conventions." [1]

Authors of the Bible must have struggled with this problem. It would be a particularly acute one for them, for they were writing about their own ancestors and about people who were supposed to be especially favored by God. It would have been easy to gloss over the unpleasant and sordid things about their characters, and it would have been a temptation to give them more virtue than they possessed. But the authors chose rather to be honest and realistic, with the result that we have an amazingly frank picture of the Hebrew people. They are folk, with all the human frailty that any of us possess. Their spirits fail easily, their religious ardor cools quickly, their rebellion against God and his requirements flames easily.

The stories recounted in this week's Scripture lesson are a case in point. Two conspicuous instances of rebellion are before us: the worship of the golden calf, with all its sensuous associations; and the lack of faith that made the Israelites unwilling to go in and possess the land God had promised to them.

From another viewpoint, however, these stories become significant, not because of their frank insight into human nature, but because *they show what God can do with men, despite their rebelliousness and faintheartedness.* They show how God's will prevails, even though man tries persistently to thwart that will.

This is a lesson we need desperately today. We are living in a time when God's will for his world seems hopelessly frustrated and denied. What *can* God do with us, disobedient and rebellious people that we are?

Israel's experience gives us three helpful insights into this matter:

1. When man rebels, it is because he lacks faith in God.
2. Yet man—or a man—can create the conditions for the fulfilling of God's plan if that man is a man of faith.
3. When God fulfills his plan, he is consistent with his nature: he shows mercy, he punishes, he forgives, he empowers.

"O Ye of Little Faith"

When the Children of Israel melted their gold and then molded an idol for their worship, it was because they lacked faith in the God who had led them to Sinai. They would have said they were most religious, most faithful. Were they not devoting themselves entirely to worship as they placed their offering before the calf of gold and as they ate and drank themselves into a stupor around the statue? But their worship was heathen; their faith was empty. The God of the covenant had expressly forbidden the worship of idols in any shape or form. He was a God who could be known only by faith and in the spirit. But because the people were unwilling to know him in this way, they asked for idols, and Aaron acceded to their request.

Again, when ten of the spies brought back unfavorable reports of the Land of Canaan, the people demonstrated their faithlessness by listening to these ten and stoning the two who said God would lead them on to victory. They did not really believe in God and his power, despite the many conspicuous evidences throughout their journey of his loving and faithful care. You would think that by this time they would be convinced of his power. The plagues against the Egyptians, the victory at the Red Sea, the manna, the law from Sinai, the Tabernacle: what more did they need to show them God was with them? But those who counseled fear prevailed, and the people plotted a return to Egypt. They were souls of little faith.

One might assume, upon reading these stories hurriedly, that the people's sin lay primarily in the evil deeds that they did. Thus the fashioning of an idol, in direct violation of the Second Commandment, and the wicked, sensuous things they did in their worship would seem to constitute their real sin. Or the plot to displace Moses with a captain who would lead them back to Egypt might appear to be the real evidence of their rebellion. Actually, however, these things were by-products of the fundamental seat of their iniquity—their lack of faith in God. It was because they did not believe in God that they did what they did.

This is the fundamental cause of all sin, even today. We do not really believe in God and his power to both save and condemn us. We do not believe he can save us, and so we adopt a hopeless, devil-may-care attitude toward life's complexities. We do not believe he can condemn us; so we flaunt his laws and disregard his judgments. What moral standards we do keep are observed under social pressure rather than because they are the law of God.

Think a moment about the things we do wrong, and see if they do not stem from a lack of faith in God. The intemperate person — intemperate with his anger, with his eating, with his drinking—is a convenient example. Why is he so short-tempered or why does he eat and drink to excess? Probably because he is facing some problem that is too much for him. It may be that he can't get along with his wife, or is having a financial struggle, or has committed a sin for which he has never sought or received forgiveness. If he believed in God as a real person, as an active force in life, he would seek God's help in solving his problem. But God is not real to him; so he drinks excessively, and society dismisses him as a no-good, as a drunkard. Society says his sin lies in the evil that he does; in reality,

[1] From *Editor to Author: The Letters of Maxwell E. Perkins,* edited by John Hall Wheelock. Charles Scribner's Sons. Used by permission.

ever, his sin is that he does not ve in God.

our fundamental problem is in God, then it seems logical that n be solved only by the way of and not by good works apart faith. And this is the New Testat insight which the Protestant rmation restored to its rightful e at the heart of the Christian re-n. Our basic human rebellion nst God—and rebellion *is* basic ur natures—can be overcome only e know God as the redeeming, iving, merciful Person that he is. was what God was trying to h Israel and why the people's ship of the golden calf was so con-y to God's will and way. This is t he has taught all mankind by ming a flesh-and-blood Person in s Christ. Know him, comprehend by faith, and you know God. Ac-him, and you have a power that do with you "far more abundantly all that we ask or think" (*Eph. 0,* R.S.V.). This is Christianity's ver to our human need for faith.

rking for God

ut how can men have enough faith God and in Jesus Christ so that 's will, continually thwarted by 's evil, may yet prevail? It is all and good to say that the answer ur fundamental need is for men ave faith in God. But we live in a ld where such faith is conspic-sly absent from human affairs. at is more, it looks as if the same ation has prevailed from the be-ning of time. Is God to be forever strated? Is there no chance that will will ever prevail?

t is a good thing to see the ex-nity of our human predicament; it es us from illusions and enables us be realistic about the *status quo,* ch has been defined as "the mess are in." The optimism of the eteenth century has a hollow ring it today. Tennyson's vision of a e when "common sense" should d "a fretful realm in awe" and

the war-drum throbb'd no longer, and the battle-flags were furl'd the Parliament of man, the Federa-tion of the world"

a wistful hope but a doubtful real-Man's "common sense" is a pre-ious hold on which to lodge our pe.

But God has not been defeated. He s a witness in every age, even in the least likely periods of history. And through these faithful witnesses his word has endured to be the antidote to our hopelessness and the answer to our fears. Moreover, these witnesses have created, under divine impetus, the conditions that have made his will and his plan for mankind to prevail.

Moses was such a witness. The stories of his dialogues with God about the perversity of the Hebrew people are told with vivid color. In *Num. 14: 11-35,* for example, God threatens to disinherit the people because of their doubt and faithlessness in not going forward to possess the Promised Land. But Moses reasons with God. His first argument is that the Egyptians will claim that the God of the Hebrews is no God at all if he deserts the people. Then he reminds God that it is his nature to be patient, merciful, forgiving, and just, and he appeals to him to "pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people . . . from Egypt even until now" (*v. 19*). In response to Moses' intercession, God agrees to pardon Israel.

Did Moses change the mind of God, who was seemingly bent on destroying the nation until the great leader interceded for them? This is the question we are always asking about prayer: Can it change God's plan?

The answer to these questions is that our prayers do not change the mind of God. But they do create the conditions by which the plan of God can be realized. Had there been no Moses to keep Israel on the path of faith and to intercede for it when it failed, God would have had to abandon this people. There would have been no one among them to fulfill the destiny that had been mapped out for them. God would have had to create a new nation, as he threatened to do. But because Moses was there, and because he was the greathearted man he was, God could continue with Israel.

Where did Moses get these qualities of unusual greatness? They were the gift of God. It is indeed marvelous to see how God nurtured Moses into the leader and intercessor who stands before him in every crisis of faith. Once this man said, "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?" (*Ex. 3: 11.*) But now he confronts God, pleading at every occasion of Israel's apostasy that Jehovah will not forget or abandon his people. How do you account for the change? One verse gives the clue—*Num. 12: 3:* "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth." His meekness is the secret of his power. Moses was the Old Testament personification of Jesus' Beati-

The Scripture Lesson for December 2

Scripture: *Ex., ch. 32; Num., chs. 11 to 14*

The Printed Text: *Num. 14: 1-10*

(American Standard Version)

Num. 14: 1 And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night. *2* And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would that we had died in this wilderness! *3* And wherefore doth Jehovah bring us unto this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will be a prey: were it not better for us to return into Egypt?

4 And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt. *5* Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel. *6* And Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, who were of them that spied out the land, rent their clothes: *7* and they spake unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying, The land, which we passed through to spy it out, is an exceeding good land. *8* If Jehovah delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it unto us; a land which floweth with milk and honey. *9* Only rebel not against Jehovah, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defence is removed from over them, and Jehovah is with us: fear them not. *10* But all the congregation bade stone them with stones. And the glory of Jehovah appeared in the tent of meeting unto all the children of Israel.

tude, "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth" (*Matt. 5: 5*). The word "meek" means humble and open toward God, which allowed God to mold him and make him into a great leader. He was pliable in the hands of God. God could fashion this man's spirit and use it for his purposes. Thus he became great.

His prayers for Israel demonstrate his greatness. He asks nothing for himself. He never seeks his own glory. His only concern is that God should be praised by men and that God's plan should be carried out. He is willing himself to die if his death will make atonement for Israel's sin. (*Ex. 32: 32.*) He will do anything that is necessary for God's will to be done among men.

Our Merciful God

Moses could intercede with God because he was sure of God's nature. God, being God, would not turn a deaf ear to the prayers of a faithful man. God had revealed himself to Moses in words that are a classic definition of his nature: "The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty . . ." (*Ex. 34: 6, 7*). These words would be repeated throughout Israel's history by historian, psalmist, and prophet, as the description of Israel's God. They would also be used by Moses in interceding for the people at the crisis when they refused to fight for the Promised Land. (*Num. 14: 18.*)

This is the God whom the Hebrews have given us for our heritage. This is the God in whom we believe: one who is "merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth . . . forgiving . . ." and just. How do we know he is all these things? Because he sent his Son to *be* all these things. Jesus Christ told us nothing new *about* God. His unique revelation was that he *was* God. All that Moses and the prophets had said about God came now to dwell in our world, in our flesh, actually to be one of us. He showed us what it meant for God to be merciful, gracious, long-suffering, and just. It meant that God "made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." (*Phil. 2: 7, 8.*)

Questions for Discussion

1. How did the Hebrews' rebellion show that they did not believe in God? Is that the root cause of our rebellion also?
2. What part do human instruments play in making possible the fulfillment of God's plan among men?
3. What unique contribution does Jesus Christ make to our knowledge of God?

Lesson 10—THE CHOICE

(Moses' Charge to the People)

ANYONE who will come up with the urgent appeal, "It's a matter of life or death," is sure to get a hearing. Immediately all means of communication—telephone, radio, telegraph—will be open to him. A bed will be secured in an overcrowded hospital. The city's police force will send out at a moment's notice complete equipment and a squad of capable officers. Law courts will prepare to protect the citizen's rights. Doctors, nurses, psychiatrists, lawyers, social workers, and ministers will be available. Surely "life" must win out in that fight!

When all these emergency measures have succeeded in saving the individual's life, relief will flood in upon him, not unmixed with gratitude. For deliverance from the threat of violent death is great cause for thanksgiving. And if life had not seemed good before the crisis, it now seems doubly significant and every moment infinitely precious. What one does with that life now has much more import than it had when life was running along an ordinary course. Thus a soldier who has survived the ordeal of war will never again look on life in the same way as he did before.

In the days of the Exodus from Egypt God delivered the Hebrew people from death—physical and spiritual, and Moses was the leader under whom this deliverance was accomplished. He was the man from God who answered their cries of distress. He was their conscience when, after the great deliverance, they found that they must look on life differently. He gave them a moral code, linking all good to God. He urged them to walk with God and to show by their attitude that they loved him. He tried to make them see that their decision for or against God was being made then and there—in their hearts and in the words that would presently issue from their mouths.

HEAVEN and earth bore witness to Moses' farewell appeal to the Hebrews: CHOOSE LIFE if you would reap the rewards of happiness and an easy conscience. "Choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live." (*Deut. 30: 19.*) Choose life, if you would live in prosperity the rest of your days. Choose the significant life that fits into God's plan and brings abundant blessing.

What is life? Life is God in us. A valued sense of perspective is found in a God-directed life. For the Hebrews that sense of perspective rose from the fact that they had been literally saved by the Lord. They must therefore have known firsthand what was expected of them. They were to live henceforth as God's chosen people, referring every decision to the Almighty One of Israel.

What did that mean?

The Reality of God

Jehovah, the God of Israel, is real in a sense in which none of the gods of the other nations can be regarded as real. He is an all-knowing, all-pervading, and sensitive God, who requires a unique faith from a unique people. "He is thy life," says Moses, "and the length of thy days." (*V. 20.*) He is a mighty friend to those in danger, "for the Lord thy God, he it is that doth go with thee" (*ch. 31: 6*). He is a forgiving and a gentle God, even when believers are few in num-

We are told that "he *loved* the le" (*ch. 33: 3*) in spite of aroused r and jealousy. Finally, Jehovah, God of Israel, is a mysterious , revealing himself when and as hooses. For "the secret things be- unto the Lord our God." (*Ch. 29.*)

he fact of Jehovah's revelation is strongly affirmed by Moses. We seen how by his intervention in ory the Lord revealed himself, ging Israel out of Egypt and mak- is covenant with the new nation. n "in all the signs and the won- " (*ch. 34: 11*) he revealed him- to Moses and to the people—the ing bush, the plagues upon the ptians, the wondrous deliverance, manna in the wilderness, and other nomena. Especially did he give rete proof of his presence among by his words in the Decalogue. gave Moses his authority as a er of men until all marveled at light of his countenance. "And e arose not a prophet since in el like unto Moses, whom the H knew face to face." (*V. 10.*) s did the Lord God of Israel make self known.

essings and Cursings

f we can judge by the record, ch covers a great span of years, ses never stopped reminding the elites of their obligations as God's ple. Nevertheless, their values e undermined repeatedly by the y things that undermine ours today mily rivalries, petty jealousies, worship of false gods and personal s, ingratitude, pride, intemper- e, and downright scandal and vice. y too allowed false ideals to dis- God's plan for them. And they bbeyed the divine Commandments. Thus, even as the Hebrews turned n obedience to rebellion, Moses' ssage to them must fluctuate be- en good news and bad. For that son the book of Deuteronomy can called the book of "blessings and sings." The people are told where choice or another will lead—on one hand, to misery and death; the other, to God's love and pro- tion and to prosperity in the Prom- H Land.

However, as we study Moses' rge to the people, we must remem- that its message is for us today too. It is more than a record showing where choices lead, more than warning and prophecy. What Moses set down are facts and realities, as true today as they were out there in the wilderness many centuries ago.

" 'Tis basely wrong
We should so meanly understrike the mark
As measure life by years; and all along
Busy ourselves arranging little schemes
That death will dash to pieces, when we might
Be building, far above those earthly dreams
Houses that stand forever in God's sight."[1]

The "little schemes" that crowded out many blessings from the life of the Israelites are still with us. They still prevent our building "houses that stand forever in God's sight."

Sleepless Nights

The cursings in the book of Deuteronomy are there for a reason. The lack of faith of the Israelites at some of the most critical points in their history caused great concern to their leaders. Jealousy among the tribes, worldliness, readiness to lapse into idolatry—all were weaknesses that repeatedly angered the spokesmen of Jehovah. Moses particularly gave vent to his feelings when, on the eve of arrival in the Promised Land, he saw that the people were still not ready to obey God. It is not surprising, therefore, that, as he prepared his farewell address, he gave very explicit directions for worship and insisted upon high moral living under God. To Moses any compromise with evil in willful disobedience to God was appalling. It caused a revulsion in him, as when he came down from the mountain with the tables of the law to find the people worshiping the golden calf. As represented by the great sculptor Michelangelo, he is about to spring to his feet in angry protest. In his right hand are clutched the tables of the law, which he will dash to pieces in a mood of indignation at the evil he beholds.

What incentive could there possibly be in choosing evil? That question is well answered in the passage of Deuteronomy that tells us of man's restlessness when he is in the clutches of evil. In other lands, far from the help of Jehovah "shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the Lord shall give thee

[1] Quoted in *A Highland Editor, James rron.*

The Scripture Lesson for December 9

Scripture: *Deut., chs. 29 to 34*

The Printed Text: *Deut. 30: 15 to 31: 3*

(American Standard Version)

Deut. 30: 15 See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; *16* in that I command thee this day to love Jehovah thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his ordinances, that thou mayest live and multiply, and that Jehovah thy God may bless thee in the land whither thou goest in to possess it. *17* But if thy heart turn away, and thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them; *18* I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish; ye shall not prolong your days in the land, whither thou passest over the Jordan to go in to possess it. *19* I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before thee life and death, the blessing and the curse: therefore choose life, that thou mayest live, thou and thy seed; *20* to love Jehovah thy God, to obey his voice, and to cleave unto him; for he is thy life, and the length of thy days; that thou mayest dwell in the land which Jehovah sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.

Ch. 31: 1 And Moses went and spake these words unto all Israel. *2* And he said unto them, I am a hundred and twenty years old this day; I can no more go out and come in: and Jehovah hath said unto me, Thou shalt not go over this Jordan. *3* Jehovah thy God, he will go over before thee; he will destroy these nations from before thee, and thou shalt dispossess them: *and* Joshua, he shall go over before thee, as Jehovah hath spoken.

Questions for Discussion

1. What is the theme of this lesson?
2. How does Jehovah reveal himself?
3. Why does Moses' message to the Hebrews fluctuate so often between "good news" and "bad news," and between "blessings" and "cursings"?
4. Where does evil, or disobedience to God, lead?
5. What is the decision the people must make on the occasion of Moses' farewell speech?
6. In what way does obedience to God lead one to a fuller life?

there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind: And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life: In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning! for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see." (*Ch. 28: 65-67.*)

The God of vengeance is stirred by the persistence of evil as a force in the world. To see wrong ends relentlessly pursued, with utter disregard for benevolent motives, is a sad spectacle indeed. Even in our own twentieth century it must call for righteous indignation and, when the evil has grown beyond reasonable control, eradication by force if necessary. So it seems to the God of the Old Testament:

"See now that I, even I, am he,
And there is no god with me:
I kill, and I make alive;
I wound, and I heal:
Neither is there any that can deliver
out of my hand." (*Ch. 32: 39.*)

The warning is clear: If you would escape neglect, destruction, or death, trust in God. Otherwise, reap the consequences of your erring ways: Be set at naught among your neighbors (*ch. 28: 43*); go hungry, thirsty, and destitute in a strange country (*v. 48*); suffer disease, torture, and despair (*vs. 61-68*). Consider these *facts,* these *realities,* before you make evil the habit of your life.

Crisis Decisions

The events that we find recorded at the end of Deuteronomy (*chs. 29 to 34*) center around the crisis of Moses' impending death. The great lawgiver, herald, and prophet, the conscience of the people, can be with them no more. There is a decision that the people alone must make, and Moses minces no words about the choice left to Israel. "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live." (*Ch. 30: 19.*)

To sum up, Moses, in his charge to the people, has great things to say: God is sensitive. He will send blessings or cursings, according to the people's response. The people need to develop sensitivity too. They must learn that to choose God is to choose life; that any other solution can only lead to misery and death; and that, when man has made the right choice, God's love and protection will know no bounds.

It is not a literal and servile adherence to the law and the Commandments that Moses urges the people to accept. Neither is it a secret commandment that would miraculously drop on them from heaven (*vs. 11-14*). But it is the love within them that God would like to feel once more poured forth in gratitude to him. It is an attitude of mind, soul, and heart. It is the acceptance of "life" in the sense God meant. And, Moses adds characteristically, it is an attitude that can be shown this moment by the very words you say.

Thus, old and tired, disappointed in his lifelong dream of crossing over Jordan with the Israelites (*ch. 32: 48-52*), Moses could yet plead eloquently with them to accept the abundant blessings of God. It is important, he says; "it is your life" (*v. 47*). To counteract the tremendous strength of evil, there must be zeal for good. There must be love and gratitude. For

"The eternal God is thy refuge,
And underneath are the everlasting
arms:
And he shall thrust out the enemy
from before thee." (*Ch. 33: 27.*)

In Moses' speech to the people (*ch. 32*), his charge to Joshua (*ch. 31: 7, 8, 23*), his recommendations to the priests (*vs. 25-27*), his blessings on the tribes (*ch. 33*), violence and love seem to fluctuate in many poetic outbursts. He called on the God of war for cursings (*ch. 32*), and on the Lord of nature for blessing (*ch. 33*). But Moses never forgot the God who dwells in the human heart and makes life meaningful.

Lesson 3—Joseph's Place in the Plan

(Continued from page 50)

Joseph, unwittingly place him in a position where he can fulfill the will of God to save his people.

Joseph does not have an easy time maintaining himself in Egypt. But divine Providence moves through various events and uses them in shaping the character and in controlling the career of this man.

Forgiveness Is the Issue

The final providential factor in the story is the famine in Egypt. This famine is the catalyst which brings Joseph to power and the family of Jacob to the point of starvation. And the crucial question in this part of the story is not will Joseph *recognize* his brothers, but will he *forgive* them?

Divine Providence has brought the whole sequence of events to this climax. God has overcome all the difficulties and barriers that the willful nature of men had erected in the path of Joseph; but forgiveness, the reconciliation of the brothers, is one step that requires human co-operation if it is to succeed.

The central issue is reached here. It is the culmination of divine activity in the arrangement of human affairs as well as the final test of Joseph's character as a man of God. It is now up to him. Joseph's decision is influenced, in part at least, by the fact that he recognizes the will of God for good in all the evil that had been planned against him by his brothers and the rest. It is not too much to say that he sees beyond this and realizes that reconciliation is necessary to the fulfillment of the purpose of God. With his positive response to the challenge in forgiving love, the goals of God for the family and the nation are attained.

From the climax the story proceeds smoothly to its conclusion, when the family of Jacob settles in Egypt under the benevolent care of Joseph.

Lesson 11—CHOSEN FOR BATTLE

(The Conquest of Canaan)

was time for Israel to settle down. Its people had wandered long enough. The people whose faith had been too weak to face conflict forty years be- were now buried in wilderness graves; only Joshua and Caleb remained of r generation. But their children, made hardier by their wanderings, were ly to fight for a homeland where they could become a stable and organized on.

he story of how this decisive phase of Israel's history was accomplished is ore us in our study this week of The Book of Joshua. It is an exciting and inating story in which city walls fall, military strategists plot campaigns, htened but clever people make themselves allies of their conquerors, and gs band hastily together to resist a force that has both might and a con- ion of right on its side.

ut it is also a story that bristles with questions for modern readers who morally sensitive yet who feel they must grapple honestly with some of the ws that are part of the Scripture witness. Specifically, the question is, Is God a God of war who can be credited with—or discredited by—the brutal- s assigned him in The Book of Joshua? It seems hard to reconcile such criptions with the total view of God given in Scripture.

ael Needed Canaan

o begin with, it is perfectly clear t Israel had reached that stage in history when it had to become a led people. They would never ieve that stability and unity neces- y for any people with a great des- unless they stopped wandering established the institutions, gov- ments, law, and order that grow of a permanent homeland.

urthermore, Canaan was the place d had long ago set aside for them. raham, Isaac, and Jacob had lived re, wandering tribesmen, it is true, nevertheless they had once in- bited this land. The four-hundred- r "vacation" in Egypt, though long ugh in our view of things to be a her permanent condition—it is ger than we have occupied Amer- —was, in God's plan, just a tem- rary situation. Canaan was the ap- nted land in which Israel was to ome a nation.

And it was land well-suited to God's rposes for Israel. It was a strategic ssroads between the great powers Egypt and Babylon. He who lived re could exert great influence from s vantage point. It was a land also h variety of terrain, with hills and ins, with lakes and rivers, a asant and lovely country, well- ted to be a "holy" land—land be- ging, in a special way, to God.

Moreover, those who now occupied were not there by any particular cestral rights. They too were "squatters"—wandering tribes who had settled in a favored spot. They had won the land by conquest and by displacing the people they had found there. Surely, they would not be surprised if another group of land-hungry wanderers treated them likewise. And if they were really determined to hold onto the land, they would have been more prepared to defend it than they obviously were!

Our problem, then, does not center in the place that Israel chose for its homeland. But what about the method God's people used to procure the land?

Was This War Justified?

Why did Israel engage in brutal and heartless warfare to secure its righteous and godly end? That is the question before us.

In the age when these events took place, warfare was the only method men knew. The Canaanites would have understood no other method; this was the way they had gained the land, and this was the only way they would allow themselves to be displaced. For Israel to have tried barter, compromises, and agreements would have been futile. It would have been a sign of weakness that, in the eyes of barbaric heathen, would have made the God of the Hebrews a laughingstock, an impotent deity. Apparently the Hebrews thought of no other course than war. They knew their enemy; they knew their times; they knew themselves.

When we ask if their war was justified, we are judging their motives by the standards of our times rather than by the criteria that they had at their disposal.

Sincere Christian people differ radically on whether or not war is ever justifiable. Those who take the pacifist view would probably say Israel should have tried conciliation and agreement. On the other hand, the modern militarist may try to justify his actions by referring to the intent and success of Joshua's armies. It is not infrequent, particularly in time of war, that men enlist the God of Joshua on the side of belligerence. But just as we should not judge Israel in the thirteenth century B.C. by our standards, *so we should not judge our actions, in the twentieth century of our era, by theirs!*

But did Israel need to be so brutal? It murdered the whole population—men, women, and children—of the cities it conquered. It starved and burned to death the entire family of one of its own people who had disobeyed God. It burned the enemy cities to the ground. It hanged the kings of the cities that opposed it. Was all this necessary?

War is always inhumane. If you are going to fight wars, you are going to do cruel, brutal, barbaric, uncivilized things. As a matter of fact, the Israelites were less cruel in these battles than most of their contemporaries. But before we condemn Israel, think of what *we* do in wars. We claim that all we do is militarily justified; perhaps it is. But we can scarcely criticize Israel's conduct of its war when we, in pursuit of war, drop atomic bombs, completely destroy cities so the enemy will find nothing of value in them, and invoke economic boycotts that starve entire populations. "War is brutal business"; and when they are at war, nations, even twenty centuries after Christ, do brutal things to one another.

But Was God in It?

The crucial question, however, is the place of God in Joshua's conquest of Canaan. There can be no doubt whatsoever that Moses, Joshua, and all the Children of Israel were per-

fectly sure that God ordered them to go to war, directed every campaign, invoked the forces of nature on the side of the Israelites, and meted out cruel punishment on the captive Canaanites. God's charge to Joshua in our Scripture lesson, "Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest," meant specifically that God would be with him in the coming battles. The Children of the Promise believed that God willed them to have Canaan and that he willed they should go to war to get it!

This view of God is reprehensible to many sincere and devout Christian people today. They believe that Moses and Joshua misunderstood what God was like and that these leaders were mistaken in justifying their actions by giving divine sanction to them. One such person writes: "God is not, and never was, what Joshua thought him to be. He never led an armed force into Canaan, and he leads no armed force today. He did not rain hailstones on the fleeing Canaanites nor supply angelic succor to the British at Mons. He did not command the slaughter of the people of Jericho nor bless the starvation of Germans by a blockade." [1]

We need this warning. It is all too easy to say that God is on our side and that he directs us to do immoral things when we are in war. It is effective propaganda to make all *our* wars holy wars and to give them the status of crusades; most likely the enemy is doing the same thing, to his god. But we cannot so easily call Scripture wrong. There must be some important truth in the view held by these great men, Moses and Joshua, for their view obviously played a decisive part in both their actions and their faith.

These men knew that the Canaanites had to be conquered. It was not only that they occupied the land that was intended for Israel. In addition, they were a wicked and immoral people. They deserved and needed God's punishment for their conduct. They could not be permitted to exercise their lasciviousness freely and in the presence of God's people-in-training, the Israelites. Professor Albright puts the matter very strongly: "It was fortunate for the future of monotheism that the Israelites of the Conquest were a wild folk, endowed with primitive energy and ruthless will to exist, since the resulting decimation of the Canaanites prevented the complete fusion of the two kindred folk which would almost inevitably have depressed Yahwistic standards to a point where recovery was impossible. Thus the Canaanites, with their orgiastic nature-worship, their cult of fertility in the form of serpent-symbols and sensuous nudity, and their gross mythology, were replaced by Israel, with its nomadic simplicity and purity of life, its lofty monotheism, and its severe code of ethics." [2] Thus, if Moses and Joshua had *not* obeyed God and destroyed his enemies, the whole future of God's plan would have been jeopardized.

The Scripture Lesson for December 16

Scripture: *Josh., chs. 1 to 11*

The Printed Text: *Josh. 1: 1-9*

(American Standard Version)

Josh. 1: 1 Now it came to pass after the death of Moses the servant of Jehovah, that Jehovah spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying, *2* Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel. *3* Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, to you have I given it, as I spake unto Moses. *4* From the wilderness, and this Lebanon, even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your border. *5* There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee; I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. *6* Be strong and of good courage; for thou shalt cause this people to inherit the land which I sware unto their fathers to give them. *7* Only be strong and very courageous, to observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest have good success whithersoever thou goest. *8* This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate thereon day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. *9* Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of good courage; be not affrighted, neither be thou dismayed: for Jehovah thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.

Appointed, Not Earned

Another important truth made clear in Scripture is that the nation which carries God's standard into battle is *called* to that responsibility. It does not earn it through its own righteousness or its conspicuous virtue. Even Israel, though it was morally superior to the nations it conquered, did not receive its position because it deserved it.

In *Deut. 9: 1-6* Moses makes this very clear to the chosen people. After assuring them that God will be responsible for their victory over the powerful children of Anak, he says: "Speak not thou in thine heart, after that the Lord thy God hath cast them out from before thee, saying, For my righteousness the Lord hath brought me in to possess this land: but for the wickedness of these nations the Lord doth drive them out from before thee. Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land: but for the wickedness of these nations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may perform the word which the Lord sware unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Understand therefore, that the Lord thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiffnecked people" (*vs. 4-6*).

Here is an Old Testament application of a fundamental Biblical truth that receives its greatest emphasis in the New Testament: "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not

[1] From *Personalities of the Old Testament*, by Fleming James. Charles Scribner's Sons. Used by permission.

[2] *From the Stone Age to Christianity*, by William F. Albright. The Johns Hopkins Press. Used by permission.

ourselves: it is the gift of God" *h. 2: 8*). Grace is defined as "the r of God"; and Israel was made a t nation by God's favor, not be- e it deserved it. It was when it d not embrace God's favor in s Christ that it lost its inheritance ceased to be his people. Today the stian Church lives, not by its eousness, but by God's favor; Christian people exercise what in- ce and leadership they have in world, not by virtue of their good ls but by the favor, the grace, of . If any nation today is called to y God's standard in battle, it is ecause that nation is exceedingly ous, but because God favors that n and uses it for his purposes. is a heavy responsibility before h the nation so called should be humble; it is not a calling to be ted with pride and self- ratulations.

Fearful Thing

is a fearful thing to be chosen by for a special task. It is fearful use the responsibility is so great. ho am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh?") It is fearful because the outcome of our labors is so momentous and far-reaching. It is fearful because the temptations are so subtle and powerful: pride and vanity, self-righteousness and self-vaunting. It is fearful because God's judgment on our corrupted spirits—corrupted by power and by desire for greatness—is so sure and so well-deserved. "It *is* a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (*Heb. 10: 31.*)

But when God calls us to special responsibility—as individuals, as nations, as a church—he gives us the power to fulfill our task: "My grace," he says, "is sufficient for thee." His grace is the thing that sustains us. It enables us to do tasks beyond our human strength. It carries us into places of service where we are amazed to find ourselves. Because it removes all striving after self-justifying virtue,

(Continued on page 71)

Questions for Discussion

1. This subject of God and warfare is one on which many sincere Christians have radically different opinions. This lesson article represents one attempt to understand the teaching of Scripture on this subject. In your class there may be great divergence of opinion. Come to the class period prepared to express your honest opinion and your understanding of God's word on this matter. Such questions as these may stimulate your thinking: Why do we live under different standards from the Israelites of the thirteenth century B.C.? Are some wars justified today? Why is any war always to be considered a judgment of God on both sides of the conflict? What can Christians do to outlaw war?

2. The second subject rising out of this lesson is the matter of a person or a people being chosen by God for a special task. Why are particular people chosen for special tasks? Why is it a fearful thing to be chosen in this way? What has the grace of God to do with the choice and its fulfillment?

Lesson 12—REDEMPTION THROUGH THE SON

(The Promise Fulfilled in Christ)

WHAT are the newspapers, the popular magazines, the radio programs, saying about Christmas? That is easy to predict far in advance of the on, because every year they say the same thing. Unless a major catastrophe stricken America by the time these words are published, it is certain that sentiments expressed this Christmas will largely repeat what was said ve months ago.

hristmas, we are invariably told, is the one day in the year when a world elfishness is transformed into a world of kindness; and would that every r had three hundred and sixty-four other days like this! The cares of life way to the gaiety of little children, and the shouting of angry men and roaring of guns are drowned out by laughter. Would that it were always A little Babe reigns in his gentleness. A Star of peace shines over a strife- world. Hope springs up anew—hope of a time when the nations of the h may live together in friendship and good will.

he phrases vary somewhat, but the thoughts do not differ greatly from Christmas to the next. We bid one another have good cheer as we bask a moment in the light that shone on Bethlehem. Christmas becomes a bol of humanity's hopes and aspirations. The star that brought the Wise n to the cradle beckons us afresh to dreams of better days than those we in now.

ut there is a sadness in these thoughts which speaks more loudly than the l-meant cheerfulness of our words. For what really impresses us is how ike the rest of life is this little golden time called Christmas. This is but ruce in the regular, relentless struggle for existence. This is but a momen- flash of brightness across a black sky. This is a day of escape, a day of ams—joyous but not quite true to life, as unreal as the world of tinsel colored lights into which we retire, if we can, for this short season.

ne would think that Christ had not yet come; that, like the Jews of old, were but dreaming of him still.

Fact, Not Fancy

To us, the star is an emblem of hope, but of hope not really fulfilled. To the New Testament, the star appears as a sign that all that the ages have waited for has arrived. To us, the Christmas festival is a wistful gesture of desire for a better world than this. To the New Testament, the Nativity of Christ marks the beginning of a New Age, the Age of the Messiah. To us, Christmas is the symbol of what we should like to see happen. To the New Testament, it is not a symbol, but an event that has already taken place.

Observe the wording of Mary's song in *Luke 1: 46-55* (R. S. V.): "He *has regarded* the low estate of his handmaiden. . . . He who is mighty *has done* great things. . . . He *has shown* strength with his arm." And so it goes, throughout the whole passage: the tenses point to something that has already happened—something that Mary can realize as an accomplished fact, and can rejoice in, even before her child is born.

The Scripture Lesson for December 23

Scripture: *Luke, chs. 1; 2*

The Printed Text: *Luke 1: 46-55; 2: 1-7*

(Revised Standard Version)

Luke 1: 46 And Mary said,
"My soul magnifies the Lord,
47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
48 for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden.
For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed;
49 for he who is mighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
50 And his mercy is on those who fear him
from generation to generation.
51 He has shown strength with his arm,
he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts,
52 he has put down the mighty from their thrones,
and exalted those of low degree;
53 he has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent empty away.
54 He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
55 as he spoke to our fathers,
to Abraham and to his posterity forever."

* * * * *

Ch. 2: 1 In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled. *2* This was the first enrollment, when Quirinius was governor of Syria. *3* And all went to be enrolled, each to his own city. *4* And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, *5* to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. *6* And while they were there, the time came for her to be delivered. *7* And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Then when we turn to *ch. 2: 1-7*, we find the record of an event in history. It is even dated, to the extent of being associated with the regime of a particular Roman governor and a particular decree that he is said to have issued. The narrative goes on to describe the circumstances of Jesus' birth. What follows, in the account of the angels and the shepherds (*vs. 8-20*), is not meant as a fanciful representation of man's age-old yearning for peace and good will. It is meant as a sign that Israel's hope has been fulfilled and the Redeemer of life lies cradled in the manger.

Our conventional talk about "the Christmas spirit" has very little direct connection with the New Testament witness. The New Testament is not concerned to tell us about a "Christmas spirit"—however amiable and ennobling that may be—but about a historical fact that has altered the whole of human existence. The New Testament summons us, not to look wistfully to a far-off future that may be an improvement on the present, but rather to consider what God has done to deliver his people from sin and death.

Toward an Understanding of Christmas

The Christmas theme seems to break in somewhat abruptly on the course of our studies in this quarter. We have been absorbed in a consideration of events and men in the early stages of God's unfolding plan for mankind. Now we are transported quickly from the ages of Abraham, Moses, and Joshua to the time of Jesus Christ. But this rapid change of scene points up the meaning of Christmas perhaps more vividly than a gradual approach might do. For it draws our attention to the fact that the birth of Jesus Christ stands in line with all the events described in the Old Testament. It reminds us that Christmas is meaningless apart from its significance as the fulfillment of God's promises to his people!

It is a commonplace to say that Christmas has become too secular. Every serious person recognizes the truth of this and deplores the fact. But the roots of our modern secular Christmas lie deeper than in the commercialization of the festival, or the concern with material things, or the social customs that have attached themselves to this occasion. Behind all our exaggerated and often inappropriate ways of celebrating this season there is a misunderstanding of what Christmas really signifies in the Church year.

In popular sentiment Christmas has become predominantly a *family* festival rather than a *church* festival. It idealizes the home, exalts domestic happiness, and, in fact, depends largely for its effectiveness upon the presence of small children. Even among families that are grown up, the appeal of Christmas is to a great degree tied up with the memories of days gone by, when children and parents gathered around the Christmas tree. Now it is clear that Holy Scripture regards family life as a blessing of God, and even an instrument of grace. Moreover, there would seem to be nothing unchristian about the merriment of family gatherings on this or any other occasion. The love that finds expression at Christmas time is certainly no enemy of the Christian gospel. But if we are seeking a religious interpretation of this season, we have to ask the question, "Is the enthroning of family life really the main point of the Christmas story?"

There was, to be sure, a little family gathered in Bethlehem. But the stress is upon the fact that the child in *that* family was Christ the Lord. There was a Babe who was worshiped in a manger, but he was worshiped because of what he was, not in order to sanction the worship of babies in general. The first Christmas meant something far more momentous and specific than our declarations about the sacredness of family life. It meant that God had become man; it meant that deliverance was at hand; it meant that something was now begun that would not be halted before God had triumphed over sin and death. It meant, not that humanity is very

Questions for Discussion

1. What impediments are there to a proper understanding of Christmas today?

2. How would you describe the dominant theme or themes of the following passages: *Luke 1: 13-17, 30-35, 39-55, 67-79; 2: 29-32?*

3. What can it mean, in days like these, to say that we are living in the age of the Messiah?

e," but that the New Man had ved to rescue humanity from its and restore to it the image of

'e have, in these studies, looked n and pondered God's promises saving deeds toward his people el. We have seen Israel delivered n Egypt and placed in the Prom- Land. We have heard once more words of God's righteous law. w, at Christmastide, we see where this ancient story was leading. aham was promised a posterity would be the children of God. people of whom he was the nder was preserved through many truggle to be, at last, in Jesus ist, the light to lighten the Gen- s. Among the "people of the prom- there appeared the One who ight God to all men and reconciled nkind to God. Bethlehem became t among all places, because there human story was begun anew. vation is the theme of the Old tament, and that salvation—which ans nothing less than the creation a new people whose head and nder is Jesus Christ—comes to s in the New Testament.

e Joy That None Can Take Away

his is the meaning of Christmas. s the celebration of the great day which God himself took our flesh n him, so that we might be nged and become like unto him. The Church rejoices because this already happened. To be sure, ion still wars against nation, and fe and greed and hatred are preva- t upon earth. But in Jesus Christ ew kind of life has already begun. cannot be said that humanity has n left to perish in its sinfulness l folly. If there is no other right- us man who ever lived, there is this e; there is Jesus Christ! And where is known he gathers to himself his n, his people, the little flock that Father gave him; and they par- e of his grace and become joined h him. They live with him and die h him and triumph with him; and in their weakness they are made strong, and in their patience and joyfulness and love they shine like stars. There is a stream of life now flowing—flowing from him who is the fountain of all life. Many there are who are caught up in it, and are swept in its living waters past death itself and into immortality.

> "For he who is mighty has done great things for me,
> and holy is his name.
> And his mercy is on those who fear him
> from generation to generation. . . .
> He has helped his servant Israel,
> in remembrance of his mercy,
> as he spoke to our fathers,
> to Abraham and to his posterity forever." (R.S.V.)

We shall gather—as many of us as are able—in our families this Christmastide. Perhaps we shall remember Him who was born on Christmas Day, not so much as the representative of family life, but rather as the man who in loneliness endured all pain and loss, so that life, death, and eternity might be made safe for us and our loved ones. Perhaps we shall remember him who in the manger entered upon a course of humility and suffering, that joy might be made full for us and ours. And those of us who are separated, by death or circumstance, will find in the Holy Child of Bethlehem the victory that overcomes the world.

We said at the beginning of this lesson article that the thoughts which were voiced last Christmas would be spoken again—unless calamity has meanwhile overwhelmed us. But there is a Christmas message that would not vary, even though cities were destroyed by bombs and multitudes were dead or desolated. It is a message that does not depend for its validity on happy homes and prosperous times, a message that does not count on anything except its own truth. It is the message of Him who has come "to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death" (*Luke 1:79,* R.S.V.). It is the assurance that he who was born at Christmas holds the keys of death and hell. It is the confidence that he shall reign, until he has put all his enemies under his feet. If your candles are all put out, the star in the sky will shine only the brighter, proclaiming, "The Lord has come!"

Lesson 11—Chosen for Battle

(Continued from page 69)

it controls and conquers the temptations of our calling. And where we fail, the grace of God in Christ forgives us, so that his judgment is merciful and meted out in chastening, redeeming love.

This, rather than the horrors of aggressive war, is certainly the primary lesson to draw from The Book of Joshua. A group of wandering nomads, erstwhile slaves, are made a nation under the disciplining, molding grace of God. The conquest of Canaan is one necessary and important step in the process of Israel's carrying out this destiny. Moses and Joshua felt sincerely that to destroy the wicked Canaanites was the thing they had to do if God's will and God's purpose with Israel was to be fulfilled.

But let us be extremely cautious about putting ourselves in the same position. We have the love of God in Christ in our hearts, a power that Moses and Joshua could comprehend but dimly. We should be living in a time when war is unnecessary, for the Spirit of Christ should be abroad in the world, bringing a sense of love and concern for all our brethren. If his Spirit and power are not strong among men, it is because we have neglected our calling to proclaim and live by that power. *If wars come today, it is because Christ's chosen people have failed in their witness, worship, and work.* If we fight a war, and feel honestly that we are defending God's cause, we must realize that we are defending it in a way that is wrong and is made necessary only because we have neglected the right way, the way of love. And we pay for our neglect in all the heartbreak that war brings to us. God does not want to be a God of war, but it may sometimes be that our sin, negligence, and lovelessness make it necessary for him to carry on his work and chastise his people through the horrors of armed conflict.

Lesson 13—"WE WILL SERVE THE LORD"

(The People Make Their Choice)

BATTLE cries have roused armies and entire populations to daring action and renewed hope again and again in the history of our Western World. Martin Luther's "Here I stand; I can do no otherwise," before the Diet of Worms; Patrick Henry's "Give me liberty, or give me death!"; and, more recently, Franklin D. Roosevelt's "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself"—these are utterances which not only exemplify leadership but which can literally change the fate of generations.

Speech has ever been an effective weapon in times of crisis. We are perhaps more keenly aware of this in our own generation than others have been in the past, because we witness daily the effect of parliamentary discussion on world events. We are aware of the precariousness of our security when we hear that a quarrel in the United Nations Assembly can cause a walkout and precipitate actual invasion by an aggressor nation.

Joshua's battle cry is the answer to a choice: Whom shall we follow in the uncertain days ahead? You can choose whom you will, says Joshua, "but *as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*" It is important for us to realize at just what juncture in history this battle cry was uttered. For like other memorable quotations from great historic speeches, Joshua's words can stir us to renewed strength and courage in a world that still needs very much the best efforts of a consecrated religious minority.

Sanctuary at Shechem

Decisions that will change the course of a nation's existence ought not to be made too hurriedly. The time for decision ought to be a time of prayer and of rededication. The turning points in the lives of Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and Joshua were, we have seen, God-dictated decisions. As we go back to them, we acquire perspective over the whole pageant of Hebrew history.

Toward the end of his life, when he had assigned land to the tribes, Joshua called "for all Israel, and for their elders, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers" (*Josh. 23: 2*) and asked them to consider what God had accomplished and what there remained for them, under his guidance, to do. Thus did they "rest from their labors," listening to the recital of the mighty acts by which Jehovah had in the past delivered them and brought them to their new home in Canaan. (*Chs. 23: 2; 24: 2-13.*) Joshua was asking these people, then, to present themselves to God in gratitude, in rededication and resolve. It was a *time for decision.*

On the occasion of Joshua's farewell speech (*ch. 24*) the people met at Shechem, about thirty-two miles due north of Jerusalem, in the valley between Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim. It is a famous spot. It had been Abraham's sanctuary in the strange Land of Canaan, where God made the promise of inheritance. (*Gen. 12: 6, 7.*) Jacob and his sons lived there. And after his first victories Joshua built an altar to Jehovah in that spot, renewing his pledge of loyalty some forty years later. Shechem was at the time one of the cities of "refuge for the slayer" (*Josh. 21: 21*). In after years it became the first capital of the Northern Kingdom, and in Jesus' day it was the chief city of the Samaritans.

Thus, on the spot appointed as the central sanctuary of the land, a valiant soldier and elder statesman reminded God's people that they had obligations to meet in peacetime as they had in war. Crisis or no, it was their bounden duty "to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses" (*ch. 23: 6*).

The War Is Not Over

The situation that faced the new nation was not easy. Boundaries had just been settled between the lands of the various tribes in the conquered portion of Canaan. Other boundaries were decided on for countries as yet unsubdued, which the tribes of Israel were to inherit in time. In *ch. 23: 4-11,* Joshua asks the representatives of the tribes of Israel to be as faithful to Jehovah in future conquests as they have been during the conquest of Canaan. But many difficulties are hinted at.

Having waged war a long time with all the kings of Canaan, Joshua knew the dangers of making peace prematurely, of intermarrying, and of compromising in religious matters. Should the Israelites merely exact tribute from their neighbors and then begin to mix with local elements, they could easily be tempted, as their fathers had been in the days of Moses, to worship other gods and to neglect their own altars.

Even as he reminds the Hebrews of the great rewards God has given them, Joshua makes it clear that God is jealous and easily provoked by ingratitude, neglect, or apostasy. "When ye transgress the covenant of Jehovah your God, which he commanded you, and go and serve other gods, and bow down yourselves to them; then will the anger of Jehovah be kindled against you, and ye shall perish quickly from off the good land which he hath given unto you." (*V. 16.*) It might be interesting to consider this warning as prophecy of a kind. For did not the Israelites suffer adversity whenever they broke away from worship of the one true God?

The fusion of population that was taking place in Joshua's day involved, we have seen, separate religious loyalties. The greatest accomplishment that could be asked of the Hebrews

Questions for Discussion

1. For what possible reasons was Shechem chosen as a gathering place on the occasion of Joshua's charge to the Israelites?
2. Now that Canaan was theirs, what problems faced the Israelites?
3. What was the response to Joshua's plea?
4. In what way does Joshua's example run true to Hebrew tradition?
5. What insight does this lesson give into our present predicament of emergency situations all over the world?
6. What interpretation of history can best serve to deepen our understanding of what the Hebrews went through from the time of Abraham to the fulfillment of the divine promise of a Messiah?

The Scripture Lesson for December 30

Scripture: *Josh., chs. 23; 24*

The Printed Text: *Josh. 24: 1-8, 14, 15*

(American Standard Version)

Josh. 24: 1 And Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers; and they presented themselves before God. *2* And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt of old time beyond the River, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nahor: and they served other gods. *3* And I took your father Abraham from beyond the River, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed, and gave him Isaac. *4* And I gave unto Isaac Jacob and Esau: and I gave unto Esau mount Seir, to possess it; and Jacob and his children went down into Egypt. *5* And I sent Moses and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt, according to that which I did in the midst thereof: and afterward I brought you out. *6* And I brought your fathers out of Egypt: and ye came unto the sea; and the Egyptians pursued after your fathers with chariots and with horsemen unto the Red Sea. *7* And when they cried out unto Jehovah, he put darkness between you and the Egyptians, and brought the sea upon them, and covered them; and your eyes saw what I did in Egypt: and ye dwelt in the wilderness many days. *8* And I brought you into the land of the Amorites, that dwelt beyond the Jordan: and they fought with you; and I gave them into your hand, and ye possessed their land; and I destroyed them from before you. . . .

14 Now therefore fear Jehovah, and serve him in sincerity and in truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River, and in Egypt; and serve ye Jehovah. *15* And if it seem evil unto you to serve Jehovah, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah.

s they gathered to hear their leader ras the permanent subordination of he Canaanite element to the Je- ovah-worshiping element. Fleming ames, in his book *Personalities of he Old Testament,* indeed considers his Joshua's greatest accomplish- ient.

Summary. The war was not over for he Hebrews, then. There were at east three tasks left for them to ac- omplish. One was the conquest of eighboring territories, assigned to ach tribe as the Lord's "inheritance." f the people remained loyal to Je- ovah, one man of them would be ble to "chase a thousand" (*v. 10*). n other words, their armies would erform more of the miraculous feats f victory for which Joshua was amous. Their next duty, which can- ot be called second to any, was the naintenance of Jehovah worship all ver Canaan and newly conquered erritory without compromise to any ect or local deity. And, first and last, he Hebrew people must abide by the law of Moses in their individual lives, remembering always the grand history that was theirs as a chosen people from the time Abraham first surveyed the land God was to give to them.

Promises Old and New

What has been done for you in the past, my people, will be done for you in the future. As you were punished before for transgressions, so will you be punished in the future for new transgressions. As you were rewarded in the past for loyalty to God and to his Commandments and to the leadership of his chosen, so will you be rewarded in the future for continued obedience.

The theme of Joshua's speech might be summed up in these few lines. After a glowing historical summary (*ch. 24: 2-18*), his own resolve to serve the Lord (*v. 15*), and further warning of the Lord's jealousy (*vs. 19, 20*), Joshua turned to the people to ask what they would do. Four times they asserted that they also would serve the Lord. (*Vs. 16, 21, 22, 24.*) Thus the covenant was made, a new promise in a new land. Joshua, we are told, recorded the words of the covenant in the book of the law of God (*v. 26*) and laid a great stone to mark the spot in the sanctuary where the promise was made.

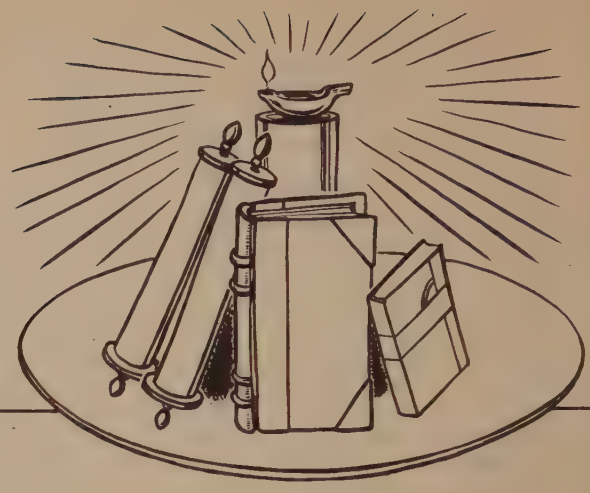
History, as it is here presented, is not merely the chronological sequence of the development of Israel. It is interpreted as the story of a call and a vocation. History is made by a succession of decisions in individual lives, and these decisions are referred to God. The history of the Jewish people, then, has a unity all its own—God, active in the lives of individuals and in the over-all experience of one national unit.

The decision of the Israelites assembled at Shechem ran true to a tradition already established. To follow the way of God, to walk straight in obedience to his law, to look hopefully to the carrying out of his promises—such had been the intention of Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and Joshua. As a matter of fact, we cannot deny when we read over Joshua's speech that the cause of Jehovah had great prestige. He cites ample proof of the fact that the Hebrews had found divine favor. Abraham's call, Israel's deliverance out of Egypt, the victory over the Amorites, the turning of Balaam's curse from Israel, the passage of the Jordan, the capture of Jericho, the victory over the Canaanites, were all brought about by God. (*Vs. 2-13.*)

The people's decision was further aided by Joshua's example. His daring, his humility, and his faith speak loud throughout his exhortation of the assembly at Shechem. He realizes that it is difficult for the average person to turn away from the temptation of idol worship and risks an unfavorable outcome by hinting that possibly they might later regret having promised loyalty to Jehovah alone. He wants their promise to be absolutely sincere.

Joshua is humble and utterly faithful. Throughout his speech it will be noted that he keeps references to himself at a minimum. Instead of speaking of his own great deeds, he glorifies the mighty deeds of Almighty God. It is God who conquered Canaan. It is God who spread fear in the enemy camp. (*V. 12.*) And it is God who strengthens him in his own decision: "I will serve the Lord."

BOOKS
for Christian Study



THE MAN BORN TO BE KING

By Dorothy L. Sayers

(Harper & Brothers; 1943. $3.75)

OURS is an age singularly fortunate in the means we have available to tell Christ's story. We have the motion picture, the radio, and now television as new handmaids of the church in communicating our faith. *The Man Born to Be King* is an example of the way an expert dramatist can tell the story of Jesus Christ on the radio. For here we have twelve plays by Dorothy L. Sayers, one of the best writers of our day, which were written for broadcasting by the British Broadcasting Company, and later assembled in book form. The plays form a cycle, telling the story of our Lord from the Nativity to his resurrection. We present this as the only "book for Christian study" this quarter, because there is ample material here for group discussion for the entire period.

Dorothy Sayers used to write mystery novels; she is best known for her amateur detective, Lord Peter Wimsey. But in recent years she has given herself entirely to religious writing and lecturing. A member of the Church of England, she has a profound sense of the mystery of our faith; and as a writer she demonstrates how drama can be one of the most perceptive and authentic ways of expressing that mystery.

This is not to say that her plays are in any way fantastic. On the contrary, so realistic are her characters and so natural their actions that we have the impression these events are about *ourselves,* that *we* are the people participating in the drama. We find ourselves asking some very personal questions: Had we been alive in Jesus' time, would we have erred as the disciples did? Would we have stood by as the rich young ruler, the governors, and the crowds did? Would we have spread lies about the resurrection because we were afraid to believe?

What is the theme of this book? Simply this: Many years ago "a number of quite commonplace human beings, in an obscure province of the Roman Empire, killed and murdered God Almighty—quite casually, almost as a matter of religious and political routine, and certainly with no notion that they were doing anything out of the way."

As your group discusses this book, you will want to read aloud some of the dialogue. Certain scenes lend themselves with particular effectiveness to this type of treatment and study.

I. Introduction
II. Plays 1-3 (Preparation)
  1. *Kings in Judaea*
  2. *The King's Herald*
  3. *A Certain Nobleman*
III. Plays 4, 5 (Ministry)
  4. *The Heirs to the Kingdom*
  5. *The Bread of Heaven*
IV. Plays 6-8 (The Betrayal)
  6. *The Feast of Tabernacles*
  7. *The Light and the Life*
  8. *Royal Progress*
V. Plays 9-11 (The Sacrifice)
  9. *The King's Supper*
  10. *The Princes of This World*
  11. *King of Sorrows*
VI. Play 12 (The Resurrection)
  12. *The King Comes to His Own*

Conclusion

I. Introduction

You may not be accustomed to spending much time on "introductions," but here is one that should occupy at least two hours of your group discussion time. In these pages Miss Sayers tells why and how the story of Christ can be expressed most effectively in the form of drama. It is necessary to understand her viewpoint on this matter if we are to interpret the plays correctly. The following questions will help you study this section:

a. What objections might be made to almost any attempt at dramatizing such sacred material? (Pp. 1-9.)

b. What specific limitations did the character of the gospel material impose on Miss Sayers as a playwright? (Pp. 2-4.)

c. What is the most *ironic* fact brought out by a vivid dramatization of the New Testament story? (P. 5.)

d. Show how certain New Testament characters compare to types of people we meet and know of today. (Pp. 7-9.)

e. What details of ancient manners and customs have been modernized in Miss Sayers' version? (Pp. 9, 10.)

f. In this series, the Hero, Christ, is of course represented as having no *hamartia,* no "tragic flaw" or human failing of any kind. This being the case, what makes the life of Christ,

to and including the crucifixion, a reat tragedy? (P. 10.)

g. How does Miss Sayers motivate udas so that he is not just another ock villain out of an old-fashioned elodrama? (Pp. 14, 15.) Is there uch justification in Scripture for the oud, intelligent, and sophisticated aracter she makes of Judas?

h. Why does the playwright rely on hn's Gospel almost more than on y other single source? (Pp. 17-20.)

II. Plays 1-3 (Preparation)

Intrigue was a shadow over Jesus' reer before it even began. Are there asons for this? There are many. he first three plays in Miss Sayers' amatization (*Kings in Judaea, The ing's Herald,* and *A Certain Noble- an*) make the political scene clearer us. What was the popular idea of e Messiah? Was he expected to ring an earthly kingdom or a heav- ly kingdom? Why was Herod afraid him? What use did the Zealots, nder the leadership of Baruch, plan make of him? What was the atti- de of the Roman representatives to- ard the Jewish hope of a Messiah? hat was the attitude of the church rty in Jesus' day toward his claims the unrecognized Messiah? These re questions to be considered as we udy the plays as a whole.

1. The first play, *Kings in Judaea,* akes a sharp contrast among *the en who call themselves kings.* First, ere is Herod the Great; then, the ree Wise Kings; and finally, the aby Jesus. Read carefully, in the Notes" at the beginning of the play, iss Sayers' description of Herod and e Three Kings. Briefly, we might say hat Herod, though he is "no mon- trous enemy of God" (p. 7), repre- ents unredeemed human nature; the Vise Kings show us mankind striving or obedience to God; and Jesus is the Man born to be King" (p. 39).

a. What characters in the play help s to find out who Jesus is?

b. Notice Herod's change of tone fter he recovers from the announce- ent of a divine Messiah. (P. 33.) bserve also the difference between Herod's speeches to the Three Kings pp. 35, 36) and his crafty talk when e is alone with his secretary at the nd of the scene (pp. 36, 37). What s Herod's answer to his own question, Can a king rule by love? (Pp. 35, 36.)

c. How has Miss Sayers expanded he conventional characterization of he Magi? (P. 25.) What is the significance of Mary's speech to Balthazar: "See, now, you sorrowful king, my son has taken your sorrows for his own" (p. 40)? Why is Balthazar called the wisest of the three? (P. 41.)

d. In the crowd scene at the end of the play we find that the rumor of a Messiah has precipitated a riot. What is the political aspect of the Messiah question? Why is it necessary for Herod to interfere?

2. *The King's Herald* covers the period of Christ's baptism, temptation, and selection of his first disciples. Its specific theme is discipleship. There is sharp contrast in the play between the darkness of sin and temptation and the light of faith and divine love. The fact that Jesus can feel so deeply "the weight of man's sin" (p. 62) and has himself been subjected to temptation (pp. 69, 70) helps us to understand how sin will be allowed to disturb the faith of Christ's followers so often and will be making constant demands on his own love and long-suffering. On the other hand, the consciousness of God's presence in a small band of fishermen is presented to us as a revolutionary marvel. This is true in the words of John Baptist, in the gathering of the first few disciples, and in Jesus' command that they *"be ruled by love"* in everything (p. 71).

a. By means of witnesses—father, mother, two children, and the woman Hannah—Miss Sayers puts before us in a dramatic way the difference in temperament between John Baptist and his cousin Jesus. Contrast the two.

b. Note the difference between the stinging words in John Baptist's sermon urging the people to prepare for the Messiah's coming (pp. 57-59) and the intimate exchange between him and Jesus Christ at the end of the scene (p. 62).

c. Why does Jesus submit to baptism "with the water of repentance" (p. 62)?

d. Contrast the characters of Judas and John Evangelist.

e. What evidence of awe and adoration do we find in the words of John Evangelist to Christ? Look for several remarks that sound like words of prayer. (Pp. 67-69.)

3. The period of preparation is drawing to a close. Jesus is "about his Father's business." *A Certain Nobleman* tells the story of the first miracles as witnessed by one Benjamin Ben-Hadad, who was an honored guest at the wedding in Cana and whose son was miraculously healed sometime later. We are given an insight into the marvel of conversion through miracles. At the same time, we realize that the performance costs Jesus a great deal. He is already saddened by the easygoing attitude of his neighbors, by the ever-present profit motive in whatever they ask him to do, by their unbelief and their irreverence. And even as he performs the works of healing and consolation, we feel that there hangs over the Master the shadow of men's doubts and vengeful suspicions.

a. What are the steps in the development of the character of Benjamin, from the beginning to the end?

b. Which of the people present at the wedding feast were aware that the miracle of the changing of water into wine had taken place?

c. Sum up the reaction of (1) the rabbi; (2) the nobleman Benjamin; and (3) the guests as a whole to the parable on the coming of the Kingdom. (Pp. 84, 85.)

d. What evidence is there that the disciples are still more concerned with practical, worldly matters, than with the presence of God in their midst? (Pp. 92, 93.) Is there any evidence to the contrary?

e. Before a miracle can take place there must be, on the part of the needy one, a willingness to believe. How does Jesus test Benjamin's faith before the miracle of the boy's healing can be accomplished? (Pp. 93, 94.)

III. Plays 4, 5 (Ministry)

The Master has much tribulation to bear. He is often alone, without the support even of his disciples. In these two plays, *The Heirs to the Kingdom* and *The Bread of Heaven,* Christ's ministry proceeds under a shadow. We see already that every man must be either *for* or *against* him! (P. 99.) True, the faithful disciples follow Jesus with all their heart and try to do his work with all their strength. But when they reach the near point of exhaustion, they rediscover their human frailty and wonder at the divine among them.

In this connection the character sketches of the disciples in Miss Sayers' introductory notes to both these plays (pp. 99-103 and 123-127) should be read over carefully. Because of his part in the turning point of the story, Judas will demand our special attention. See also Miss Sayers' sketch of him in the general introduction (pp. 14, 15).

4. The fourth play, *The Heirs to the Kingdom,* shows us that the Kingdom of Heaven, like a net cast into the sea (p. 111), gathers in the good and the bad, the innocent and the poisonous, the fortunate and the despised. This holds true among the disciples, among the governors of the land, as it does with the multitudes that came to listen to Jesus. The central stress, then, is equal opportunity to choose Christ.

a. Is there any particular significance in the fact that Judas asks so many questions of the disciples in Christ's absence? (Pp. 108-111.) What points does Judas have in his favor as a new disciple? Why, on the other hand, does he put the Master "in a strange mood"?

b. Why is Judas selected as a tool by the Zealots (Baruch) and the High Priest (Caiaphas)? (P. 116.)

c. At the committee meeting, what stand does Nicodemus take on the subject of Christ? (P. 116.)

d. What is significant about Christ's healing of the centurion's servant?

5. In the fifth play, *The Bread of Heaven,* there is a great deal of preoccupation with the divine power of Christ. The disciples are awed by miracles and by the power given them to perform miracles. Note the theme of the play. (P. 125.) How is the theme developed? Note also that Judas, in this play, at last defines himself. (Pp. 125, 126.) It is true that the other disciples are not innocent. They are only too prone to grumbling, doubt, and self-pity. But that happens chiefly when Jesus is called away for a time. They are brave and lovingly devoted to his work otherwise.

a. It is difficult to understand miracles. In his account of the healing of Esther, Philip gives some insight into *what it feels like to be an instrument of God.* (Pp. 129-131.) The disciples all feel the same exhaustion after they perform miracles. (Pp. 136, 137.) What does Jesus urge them to do when they are tired? (P. 138.)

b. After the miracle of the feeding of the multitude, Jesus goes off alone. Why is Judas suspicious of Christ's intentions? (Pp. 140, 141.)

c. The disciples have difficulty understanding the Master. Why is Simon Peter confused at the end of the play? (Pp. 145, 146.)

d. During this play Christ becomes increasingly aware of the fact that he "must go through sorrow and shame" (p. 146). Does he prepare the disciples for the inevitable? What specifically does he say?

IV. Plays 6-8 (The Betrayal)

The betrayal is the central theme of these plays—*The Feast of Tabernacles, The Light and the Life,* and *Royal Progress.* For here we find that the undercurrent of ill feeling on the part of Judas rises to heights of suspicion and jealousy until "Satan entered into him" (*John 13: 27,* R.S.V.), and he does an evil deed without equal in human history. Judas and all that he represents prepare to "murder God Almighty."

How could this have happened? It happened because Christ was not understood. We have a strange situation in these plays. There is the Son of God, continuing his ministry in spite of danger to his life and the warnings of his disciples, making himself known to people who will not listen, proclaiming the establishment of a Kingdom that cannot be of this world. The disciples know who he is, but they do not know his future. Judas knows something of his future, without being completely sure of his identity. The crowds know neither who Christ is nor what will happen to him.

6. The first evidence of sin is unbelief. It is not surprising, therefore, that, in *The Feast of Tabernacles,* the divinity of Christ is questioned. Only a few disciples see the transfiguration. Humble people have some inkling of his divinity. But the rulers of the land, the hecklers in the crowd, call Christ's claim blasphemy. Judas is suspicious. And as for the others—those who question—it is as if they, through persistent unbelief, were losing a last chance for happiness.

a. What does Christ say about forgiveness? (Pp. 158, 159.)

b. Peter, John, and James were pledged to secrecy about the transfiguration. What is the one point in the promise Christ exacted of them that they cannot understand? (Pp. 161, 162.)

c. On the surface, Judas seems loyal to Jesus in his testimony to Caiaphas. (Pp. 166-168.) Why, then, is this interview a step in the wrong direction for him? See Miss Sayers' interpretation. (P. 150.)

7. The theme of *The Light and the Life* is clearly set forth in the "Notes." (P. 173.) "The will to life" is closely bound with God-consciousness, and both shine through every word and gesture of Christ in these episodes. Not only is the raising of Lazarus the key to understanding Christ's resurrection. (See p. 174.) It shows also the vanity of plotting the arrest and execution of Christ as if he were a mere man.

a. Miss Sayers introduces the first part of this play as "the lull before the coming storm" (p. 173). Why do the disciples want things to go on as they are? (P. 187.) What do they fear?

b. In answer to Peter's question, note what made Judas "go off the deep end like that" (p. 189).

c. What crosses will Jacob and Lazarus have to bear, despite their spiritual insight? (Pp. 181-183, 192.)

8. We have reached the turning point of *The Man Born to Be King.* The two sides, *for* and *against* Jesus, are sharply defined. *Royal Progress* will now answer the question about which hinges the entire action of the play: Will Jesus be king or King?

a. The disciples do not know why Christ weeps, even after he tells them. (Pp. 209, 210.) Note the tragic irony of this situation.

b. How does Christ apply the law of love to certain difficult situations? (Pp. 214-217.)

c. How does Christ attempt to save Judas from sin and mental anguish? (P. 207.)

d. How is Judas' influence on the other disciples felt? (Pp. 208, 209.)

e. How does this play complete the portrait of Judas that has been developed through the whole cycle? (Pp. 198-200 and 220-222.)

V. Plays 9-11 (The Sacrifice)

Christ's decision to go to the cross was already made. During Holy Week he endures the suffering that must follow that decision. Above all, he seeks to protect his unknowing disciples from the shock of seeing him leave this earth. If we read carefully Miss Sayers' analysis of the character of Jesus as a fusion of God-consciousness and Man-consciousness (p. 230), we may understand the Passion as it was intended to be understood. In this connection a rereading of pp. 7-12, in the general introduction, would be rewarding.

9. In *The King's Supper* the note of crisis (p. 225) is principally the shock of Christ's farewell on the eleven disciples. They cannot grasp the fact that he must "go through sorrow and shame" and leave them.

a. Judas seems to have "a chip on

his shoulder" in the first scene. What words of his give that impression?

b. Christ shows the disciples by action rather than by words what it is to do God's work. What is the reaction of the various disciples to this demonstration of love and service? (Pp. 236-238.)

c. What specific words of Christ shock the Eleven during the Last Supper? (Pp. 226-228.)

d. The final act of betrayal is quickly carried out. Judas has a motive for denouncing Jesus to Caiaphas. What is it? (Pp. 239, 240.) In what way has he twisted the truth?

10. *The Princes of This World* shows us the politics behind the betrayal. The picture we get is vile, but not far removed from practices common to this day. In the end, even Judas is horrified at the methods used to convict Jesus.

Most startling of all to the readers of this play is the realization that each of "the princes of this world" can justify his own part in the "murder of God Almighty."

a. At the trial before the Sanhedrin (pp. 263-265), is any sympathy shown for Jesus? How then is he convicted?

b. It is interesting to note that the various officials before whom Jesus appears, and who must be finally responsible for his death, are not at all agreed. Caiaphas and Pilate are at opposite poles politically. State briefly the position of each as far as Christ is concerned. Compare the character of the two. (Pp. 253, 255, 256.)

c. What is Herod Antipas' (pp. 254, 255) reaction to Jesus in the report to Pilate? (Pp. 271, 272.)

d. In the end it is the crowd that makes the decision against Christ in answer to Pilate's questions. What political factors are involved in their decision? (Pp. 273-278. See also "Note," pp. 257, 258.)

e. In two brief scenes we have our last encounter with Judas. (Pp. 262, 263 and 266, 267.) What makes him so much more sin-conscious than Caiaphas can ever be? (See also "Note," pp. 253, 254.)

11. The *King of Sorrows* reaches the pinnacle of our story. *The King's Supper* presented Christ's attitude as he accepts the road of shame and suffering and sacrifice. *The Princes of This World* contrasted sharply the indifference, lethargy, mockery, even scorn, of Christ's accusers. Now the sacrifice must be accomplished.

A helpful way to study this play is to analyze the reactions of various people to the crucifixion.

a. What does Mary Virgin think of as she looks on?

b. How do Christ's friends—John, Mary Magdalen, Joseph—react?

c. Contrast the behavior of Dysmas and Gestas, the two thieves.

VI. Play 12 (The Resurrection)

A joyous message is heard after the darkness and pain of the crucifixion. Through the resurrection, human tragedy becomes Divine Comedy. (P. 11.) The bodily presence of Christ is replaced by his divine presence. And the disciples believe.

12. *The King Comes to His Own* is "a play about the door between two worlds" (p. 312). The existence of another world, more real than our own, is evidenced by the profound impression of various supernatural appearances on the disciples and friends of Christ. By giving us an insight into the faith of John, James, Mary Magdalen, Peter, and others, Miss Sayers attempts to bridge the gap between the two worlds. And the disciples' newly found faith is her touchstone.

a. What details of the human Jesus are called to mind in the conversation at the beginning? (Pp. 319, 320.)

b. How does John's concern for Peter show Christlike example?

c. The soldiers' account of the resurrection (pp. 324, 325) is objective. How does Caiaphas react to it and to Joseph's confirmation of it? (Pp. 328-330.)

d. Nicodemus, "a timid intellectual" (p. 317), has an insight into the truth after all his mistakes. (Pp. 328, 329.) Sum up his character.

e. Single out the testimonies of the women regarding the risen Saviour.

f. Why did Christ reveal himself privately to Peter and not to John? (Pp. 330, 331; see "Notes," p. 313.)

g. Thomas' statement of the divinity of Jesus opens the eyes of the disciples to certain facts they had not fully grasped before. What is the meaning of the crucifixion as they now understand it? (Pp. 336, 337.)

Conclusion

Miss Sayers' conclusion is found in the splendid introduction that would of itself make this book invaluable. Read again pp. 21, 22, beginning, "I am a writer and I know my trade; . . ." Here is her personal testimony as to the value of a new presentation of the gospel story.

a. Has she succeeded in bringing the implications of the story up to date?

b. In what ways does the situation in Jesus' day resemble ours today?

c. Consider love as the central truth in the Christian way of life. Note how this principle has saved individuals in *The Man Born to Be King* from difficult situations (for example, Peter).

d. How do the disciples learn to get along without the bodily presence of Christ?

e. What have you learned about the personality of Christ from the book as a whole?

Program Guide FOR ADULT GROUPS

These are German children who are members of a church school class in a German Protestant church. The contrast between their faces and the hard cynicism of the "Hitler Youth" of the 1940's illustrates the importance of Christianity confronting Communism in the right way.

Christianity Confronts Communism

By Ernest Lefever

ANDREW had a clear-cut face and piercing eyes. His words carried the conviction of one prepared to die for his faith. I instinctively liked him. It was in June, 1948, in Budapest where I met this young man. He, with thousands of his fellow Hungarians, had enlisted in a crusade to build a new world, starting with a bridge across the Danube and ending with a classless society. Andrew was a Communist. To him Stalin was the Messiah and the Soviet Union the "promised land."

Andrew reminded me of Jack, whom I had met some years earlier in New York. Jack had just spoken over America's "Town Meeting of the Air." As I shook his slender hand and looked into his face, I saw a youth fired with a passion to remake America, so that all men would enjoy the fruits of their labor. Jack did not call himself a Communist, but in the past decade he seems to have regarded Stalin as his Fuehrer and the U.S.S.R. as the ideal state.

What Is Communism?

What is this faith which has captured Andrew and Jack and a million others like them around the world? Why has Communism become one of the most powerful forces of history? What is the Soviet Union trying to do? Why is Communism a threat to Christianity and to democracy? Often public figures are accused of being Communists. How can you spot a real Communist? What is a "fellow traveler"? What should Christians do about Communism in America and abroad? These questions we shall attempt to discuss, hoping that such discussion will help us replace fear with understanding and hysteria with informed awareness.

ERNEST LEFEVER worked among prisoners of war in Europe from 1945 to 1948 as field secretary for the World Y.M.C.A. In the past five years he has traveled extensively in Europe and the Far East, interviewing men like Prime Minister Nehru and Cardinal Mindszenty. This article grows out of special study in which he is engaged at Yale University.

A promise of a new order. When Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels issued the *Communist Manifesto* in 1848, calling upon the workers of the world to unite, they gave millions of poverty-stricken and exploited people the promise of a better world. The new world would be one with no bread lines, unemployment, or war, a world where force itself would disappear—in short, heaven on earth. This promise of a new society is the greatest strength of Communism, because it gives hope to the depressed, the downtrodden, and the subject peoples of the world, particularly the darker races of Asia and Africa.

A philosophy of economic determinism. Communism is a total philosophy that its followers believe with religious devotion. Marxism holds that the new socialist order will be ushered in by economic laws. Nothing can hold back the upward march toward a classless society. Nevertheless, it is the duty of the working class to fight the exploiting capitalist class. Through this class struggle, the dawning of the new day will be hastened, the evils of capitalism will end, and all men will live as brothers.

A revolutionary program. In its bitter struggle for the "promised land," the working class must adopt revolutionary methods. In fighting for social and economic reforms, Communists resort to any means that further their ends. Marx asserted that undemocratic and violent methods are entirely necessary during the "dictatorship of the proletariat," a period preceding the advent of full Communism. In the new society every person will "contribute according to his ability and receive according to his need." The ruthlessness of Marxism, plus the historic imperialism of Russia and the messianism (sense of divine destiny) of her people, has led to perhaps the greatest reign of terror the world has ever seen. In its fanatical drive for world domination, the U.S.S.R. has thrown at least 15,000,000 persons into concentration camps. All civil liberties, and especially freedom of religion, have been eliminated in any real sense of the term. Every person and social institution, including the Church, failing to go along with the totalitarian regime, must be neutralized (stripped of all political and social influence) or liquidated. Deviation from the Kremlin's policy, like heresy during the Spanish Inquisition, means death. With Communism's increasing recourse to liquidation, violence, and terror, it appears that the Kremlin has surrendered the ideals of earlier Marxism in its mad conquest for power in Europe, Asia, and throughout the world. The dream of a better world has become the nightmare of an insatiable tyranny.

The Challenge of Communism

Few people need to be persuaded that Christianity must repudiate Communism. Though recognizing that Communists theoretically are seeking a better social order, we must reject utterly the materialistic philosophy of Marxism. We must likewise reject their evil methods that betray noble ends. How can a society of peace and brotherhood be built upon tyranny, murder, fear, torture, and thought control? According to the Christian view, persons are more than pawns to be manipulated by a ruling clique bent on military aggression and conquest.

Communism is a threat to all we hold dear as Protestants and as citizens in a free society. But it is more than a threat; it is a judgment and a challenge. The Marxian critique of capitalism, with its evils of poverty, inequality, and imperialism, has been a force for social reform in the Western World. The Amsterdam Assembly of the World Council of Churches, in August, 1948, recognized the inadequacy of any system based primarily on economic foundations, when it urged the churches to "reject the ideologies of both Communism and *laissez faire* capitalism." When hungry, poverty-stricken Asiatics turn to Communisn for salvation, it is in a measure due to the inadequacy of Christian missions and the U. S. foreign policy as well as Oriental feudalism. In this judgment there is a challenge for our country, our church, and each one of us. The challenge is this—can *we* meet genuine human need more effectively than the Communists? Can we give the lie to their hollow promises of security and freedom by outdoing them in our assistance to the subject peoples of Asia and Africa? A Christian is compelled by his faith to respond to the challenge of Communism by wiping out the misery and exploitation on which it breeds and by continuing his faithful witness to the gospel.

How Not to Fight Communism

But instead of seeing the challenge in Communism, most non-Communists react emotionally against it. This attitude is unrealistic because it rejects the truth in Communism along with its error. Such people try to fight Communism without recognizing the conditions that give rise to it. This is the major weakness of the Roman Catholic Church's fight against the Kremlin. In Rome one is shocked by the sharp contrast between the splendor of the Vatican and the squalor of the slums. Throughout Italy, which is more than ninety-five per cent Catholic, there is a desperate need for land reform. The strong Communist movement there is working to divide the land more justly and to eliminate poverty. These are legitimate Christian goals, and people will not rest until they are achieved. The Catholic Church cannot fight Communism effectively by supporting feudalism and blocking needed social reform, as it so often has. In certain Eastern European countries like Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary,

Crossroads and *Social Progress*

With this issue begins a new policy of presenting certain topics in common with the magazine, *Social Progress*. The October issue of *Social Progress* carries correlative articles on the subject of Communism, and the persons responsible for this program in your group should read both magazines for background information. Each issue of CROSSROADS will present some social issue in co-operation with *Social Progress*, and that magazine will provide detailed helps that will supplement but not duplicate program articles found here. Next quarter, the subject of the responsibility of press and radio will be the mutual emphasis so treated by the two magazines.

Social Progress is published monthly, with the exception of July and August, by the Division of Social Education and Action, Board of Christian Education, Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., 830 Witherspoon Building, Philadelphia 7, Pa. Every minister receives it. Subscription price: $1.00 a year.

the Catholic Church was a major land-holding institution and had a stake in the old order. Many of these properties have been confiscated by Communist regimes. The Vatican is ill-suited in other ways to pose as the defender of democracy and human freedom against tyranny. Speaking of the evils of Communism, Bertrand Russell, the winner of the Nobel Prize for literature in 1950, says: "Every one of these evils was exhibited by the Catholic Church when it had power. . . . It is therefore irrational to suppose that much would be gained if, in the defeat of Communism, Catholicism were enthroned in its place."

How to Spot a Real Communist

Going beyond the label-conscious press, how can we spot a real Communist? How does he differ from a liberal who may have similar interests in social reform? Strictly speaking, a Communist is a member of the Communist Party. A "fellow traveler" is a non-Party member who faithfully follows the party line, especially its foreign policy, which now is the foreign policy of the Soviet Union.

Today Communists can be identified primarily by their attitude toward the Soviet Union and by their changing tactics in obedience to shifts in Russian foreign policy. The U.S.S.R. is regarded as infallible. If a man switched from isolationism to intervention in June, 1941, if he opposes the Marshall Plan, if he hates Tito, supports the Progressive Party, and has justified Communist aggression in Korea and elsewhere—if he meets all these tests, it is safe to assume that he is at least a consistent "fellow traveler" if not a card-carrying Communist. In short, one who has nothing but praise for the U.S.S.R. and little but condemnation for the U.S.A. is probably a Communist or "fellow traveler."

A Positive Christian Answer to Communism

Refusing to react hysterically against Communism is the first duty of every Christian. His second duty is to respond to the challenge of Communism in positive action. As citizens in a free society, Christians must be more active than Communists in working for greater justice, equality, and peace. We must labor unceasingly for substantial social reform at home and abroad, always employing methods which will lead to the ends we seek.

In America we can fight Communism by working for more adequate social security laws, better medical care and housing, and the end of racial segregation. Opposing these needed reforms, as so many do, plays into the hands of the Communists. We must seek to eliminate poverty, unemployment, and those taxes which fall most heavily on the low-income groups. The most effective answer to Communism here is to *make our democracy work better.*

What Is Our Responsibility Abroad?

Our country can help combat Communism abroad by strengthening the free world and opposing aggression. We should give substantial economic aid to the underdeveloped areas of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The people of these areas need American food, American technical assistance, and American capital if they are to wipe out the misery upon which Communism feeds. The masses of Asia, most of whom go to bed hungry every night, are more interested in food than in the free elections that the United States policy has tended to emphasize. Besides giving economic aid and supporting democratic governments, our country should increase vastly its foreign information service, especially "The Voice of America." The traveler abroad is amazed by the distorted picture many people have of Americans, of our way of life, and of our aims. This is understandable when we realize that foreigners see us mainly through Hollywood films and wealthy tourists. The most important single force in twisting the truth about the Western World is the Soviet Union's hatemongering campaign of deceit and slander, carried to every corner of the earth. Russia's disregard for the canons of truth make its propaganda the same type as the words that fell from the lips of Propaganda Minister Goebbles. What could be more diabolical than promoting a world-wide peace campaign with one hand and staging a war of aggression in Korea with the other? In the global war of ideas and ideals, America needs more than ever before Senator William Benton's "Marshall Plan in the field of ideas."

Protestant missionaries have done a great deal to eliminate the misery upon which Communism breeds. But as we can see from the fate of China, it has not been enough. We need many more missionaries who see the Christian imperative for economic reform and are prepared to co-operate with the social and political movements striving for greater justice. In the long run, it is the conviction of most Christians that Communism must be beaten at its own game by a more valid appeal for the rights of man in the light of the will of God.

Program Helps for Study of This Subject

The regular reader of CROSSROADS will recognize a now familiar arrangement in Mr. Lefever's article, "Christianity Confronts Communism." As in many of our program articles, there are enough resources here for more than one meeting. The program committee should also refer to these other helps: *Social Progress* for October, 1951, which carries special emphasis on Communism; John C. Bennett's *Christianity and Communism* (Association Press; 1949; $1.50); *What About Communism?* by Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. (Public Affairs Committee, Inc., 22 East 38th Street, New York 16, N. Y.; 20 cents).

Two persons selected from the adult group can open the discussion by presenting in brief (not more than ten minutes) statements on the topic "What Is Communism?" By studying the material in CROSSROADS, *Social Progress,* and the sources cited above, they will be able to pack their presentation with facts and open an active discussion. At the close of the program, the chairman should summarize the discussion.

Another approach, which could be used at a second session if desired, would investigate other topics found in any serious consideration of Communism. "How to Spot a Real Communist," "Effective Ways of Fighting Communism" (perhaps entitled "How Not to Fight Communism"), and "The Christian Answer to Communism" could comprise three fascinating subjects for a symposium. Make sure that an effort is made to deal with concrete things that adults can do in the local church to strengthen democracy and combat totalitarianism.

If discussion needs to be stimulated or directed, these questions will help:

1. What did Prime Minister Nehru mean by his statement concerning the East-West struggle: "That side

(Continued on page 85)

THE ROAD TO ROME

RESOURCES FOR A PROGRAM ON WHY PEOPLE BECOME ROMAN CATHOLICS

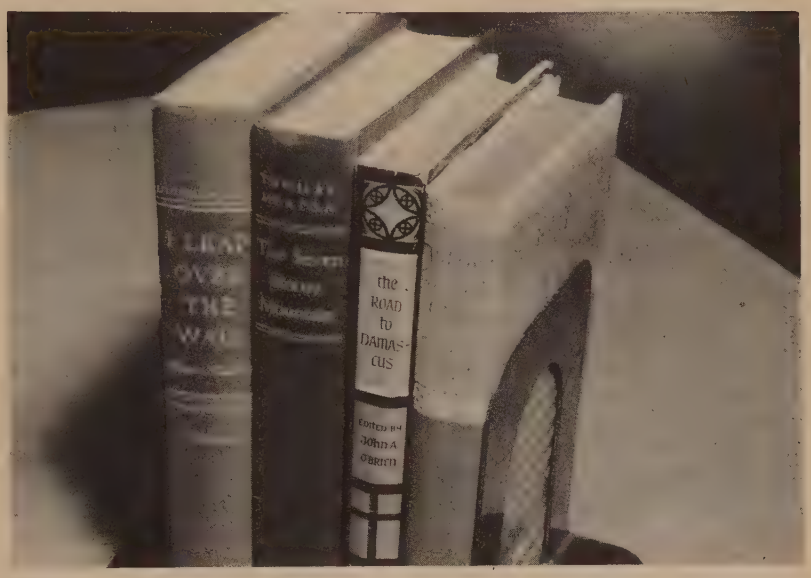
Try as we will to be tolerant, there is scarcely a person among us who has not been affected by the tensions that exist between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. We're always hearing about mixed marriages and facing the problem among our friends or relatives. Our children have Catholic playmates who part ways with them when it comes school-going time. And we read in the newspapers of prominent people who have "gone over" to the Roman Catholic Church from a non-Roman (a good term, since most of them were not really Protestants) background.

Then the most talented converts feel impelled to tell their story to the world. The secular press knows these stories are good "copy"; they have a "name," they represent a radical change, and they tell of folks who have found something tangible to believe in. Therefore, these writers have no difficulty selling their spiritual autobiographies to magazines and leading book publishers.

Some anxiety-ridden readers pick up these stories and wonder if they might find a similar peace. It may seem convincing to read of an absolute authority that appears strong in an insecure world.

There is legitimate cause for concern about the problem. Roman Catholicism, by its very nature, is out to convert Protestants to the Roman Church; it would not be consistent with its distinctive character if it did not have this proselytizing zeal. And earnest Protestants do not want to stand by to let them do their work. Therefore, your adult group should and could spend some time on this problem.

There are many ways to tackle it. Our suggestion this quarter is that you study some of these stories of conversions being published today to learn why and how certain people have found what they want in the Roman Catholic Church. Such a study will be most valuable if it (1) enables you to see where the Protestant Church has failed (it is one of *our* distinctive tenets that we can thus criticize ourselves); (2) uncovers the causes of unrest in our society that makes Romanism attractive; (3) clarifies for you the ways in which Protestantism and Romanism differ; (4) makes you zealous to maintain the positive truths of which Protestantism is guardian in our day; (5) alerts you to be critical in your reading of these well-written and attractive books.



Two books edited by Father John A. O'Brien have these stories assembled in convenient form. One is *The Road to Damascus* and the other is *Where I Found Christ.* They may be borrowed from your local library or purchased at almost any bookstore.

To lead the discussion of these stories, you should select a person with balanced judgment and keen discernment. You are interested in the truth, not in a tirade against an opposing force. (Be alert to note opinions that reflect prejudice rather than intelligence.) An analytical review of the books will be the leader's task.

Analyze the Books

The writers have been chosen for these books by Father O'Brien not only because they are able to tell in the first person how conversion happened to them, but also because each is an experienced writer and can express himself appealingly and skillfully. Several well-known people are among the group: Evelyn Waugh, Fulton Oursler, Frances Parkinson Keyes, Mrs. Arnold Toynbee, Senator Rober F. Wagner, Avery Dulles, Thomas Merton, and, of course, Clare Boothe Luce.

Converts are reputed to be more ardent than older Catholics born in the faith. Certainly these writers will not prove disappointing on that score. Like G. K. Chesterton, who is said to have yearned to see a new papal bull published in each edition of the London *Times*, these twenty-nine writers enthuse about their new-found faith. If the Protestant reader sometimes gets the impression that these are well-trained show animals sometime recently captured from the wilds and now performing under the whip of an

adroit ringmaster, it is because they go through their paces so smoothly. The formula varies little. First each tells of his unsatisfactory previous state, then of his awakening, and now of his satisfaction in the "Mother Church" (their term, not ours). But, mark you, it is done well; and it carries the additional value of being written by those who themselves have had the experience.

The reader cannot fail to notice that although *The Road to Damascus* is published by a secular publishing house (Doubleday & Company, Inc.), it is straight evangelistic writing from the Catholic Church. It carefully carries the customary approval of the *Censor Librorum,* and in large letters prints *"Nihil Obstat,"* literally "Let nothing stand in the way," or more freely, "This may be published." In a book designed to be read by Protestant readers, and one that tries to maintain that freedom and democracy exist in the Roman Catholic Church, this censor's stamp is an interesting mark.

These two anthologies are certainly slanted for non-Catholics. They are not the sort of thing that those within the Roman Communion would be reading or would find particularly appealing. The reader is told explicitly how to seek instruction from a priest, where to write for more literature, what further books in this line can be read. Over and again, he is assured that the social stigma of conversion is not so bad as it seems. The priests who instruct, it is stressed, are kind, courteous, and never persistent. An occasional Protestant is quoted, and a few kind words are dropped about non-Roman churches. There is one, just one, admission that the Church of Rome has some imperfections among its faithful. The reader is never cajoled, never pushed, but very frequently reminded that this step of conversion resembles coming back "home." Those who are familiar with the newspaper advertising and billboard entreaties sponsored by Knights of Columbus will recognize the approach.

At least seven of the group had married Roman Catholics and had come into the Church by this well-trodden road. Several of them were what Mrs. Luce calls "Good Friday converts"; that is, they sought the consolation of authoritarian religion because of sorrow. Significantly, eleven of the number come out and mention that they had been neglected or offended by their former religious allegiance. Nearly all of them indicate at least implicitly that they found something lacking in their former state. Not the least value for us in such a study as this is to seek *to discover those places in our own church life which lose or even alienate people who are seeking a vital faith.* Nearly all the discussion time of a program built around *The Road to Damascus* could be used on just this single question.

Complaints of the twenty-nine converts reporting in Father O'Brien's two anthologies include racial prejudice in Protestant churches, class distinctions, lack of doctrinal certainty, church bickering, careless worship services, sectarianism, and neglect of needy souls.

It is not difficult to see a defensive attitude in Father O'Brien's book. Each of the contributors seems to be seeking to justify his position, evidently for social reasons. Consider with your group what it must mean for a person to take on a new religious faith as an adult. Several of the authors have previously written articles or books to explain the step they took, and one gets the impression that they were quite willing to have a new opportunity to tell the story. Mrs. Luce seems sensitive, evidently because she has suffered at the hands of friends: "But why should the wise friends of the converts whose nostrums and panaceas, credos and philosophies they have supported so long, and so dumbly, smite them so sore? . . ."[1] From Mrs. Keyes: "I do not want them to feel bewildered when they read an announcement which I know is bound to amaze them. I do not want them to say to themselves and to each other, 'So Frances Parkinson Keyes has become a Catholic! But why?' Here is the answer, insofar as I can express it."[1] As a matter of fact, each of the converts shows his peculiar sensitivities, some to the criticism of Protestant friends, others to the searching gaze of old-line Catholics, still others to professional associates. Doubtless we fail to appreciate fully the tremendous adjustment a convert in *either* direction is called upon to make.

Anyone accustomed to reading Protestant writing about the Church is ready to see honest criticism of church organization, doctrine, or policy. But *The Road to Damascus,* consistent with the Roman view of the matter, has almost no self-critical overtones at all, except to admit that individuals in the church are not perfect.

In *The Road to Damascus,* it is asserted that argumentative factions do not exist in the Roman Church (do you think this is true?), that they have a "real democracy," that "the Roman Catholic Church went serenely on her way, never changing her doctrine to meet the bidding of a dictator,"[1] that Monsignor Fulton J. Sheen does not like publicity, or that "the appeal of the Catholic religion is primarily and chiefly to the intellect."[1]

Various statements in *Where I Found Christ* assert that Roman Catholicism sounds "the death knell of totalitarianism," that the priest in the Mass "holds God himself in his hands," that "Protestants do not usually represent the Catholic argument as at all the same thing that Catholics do. Yet . . . Catholic writers do represent Protestant arguments as Protestants do," that there is an "apparently universal tendency of Protestant churches to weaken in faith from one generation to the next," that there is "nothing between the Catholic faith and atheism."[2] There are, nevertheless, historical and contemporary evidences and opinions that dispute these claims. Perhaps if one is to accept all church claims uncritically, the Monseigneur's advice to one convert never to "be anxious about details" in studying Catholicism is quite useful.

The issue for some of the converts was just what it has been for many another—the choice between a religion of authority and a religion of the spirit. Courageous living can doubtless be had in either place; yet a Protestant cannot escape the feeling that the greater act of faith is called for in the religion of the spirit.

Confounding the Pope

Margueritte Harmon Bro, in *The Christian Century* of February 8, 1950, told of one Protestant's reaction to the Pope's recent invitation for all Christians to come into the Roman Church. In humorous style, she recounted the church crises she had witnessed in the past fifty years, crises that would be incomprehensible to Pope Pius XII. Wondering what he

[1] From *The Road to Damascus,* compiled by Father John A. O'Brien. Used by permission of Doubleday & Company, Inc.

[2] From *Where I Found Christ,* edited by Father John A. O'Brien. Used by permission of Doubleday & Company, Inc.

ld do with our Protestant nature
ve did accept the invitation, she re-
nts the revolution in one church
en the common chalice was re-
ced with individual communion
ps, and the successive difficulties in
roducing musical instruments in
rship services, the American Re-
ed Version to the church, new cur-
ulum studies, or palms for decora-
n. Of union meetings of Christian
deavor Societies, Temperance Sun-
vs, Bible study disputes and Sunday
rch school collection problems, she
tes, and then, from a "recalcitrant
rt," concludes that there is "no use
ing what the Pope would have done
h this half-century of schism and
rument; he would have settled
tters in short order. Well, we have
tled them in long order and in the
ocess are growing . . . still free and
dependent and finding our way."

ther Suggestions

Your meeting devoted to a critical
dy of *Where I Found Christ* may
se further questions about the
fferences between Roman Catholi-
m and Protestantism. One brief, in-
pensive pamphlet on these matters
Roman Catholicism and Vital
sues, by George A. Crapullo. (63
ges. It may be purchased from your
arest Westminster Book Store for
cents.)

Other popular titles that paint an
ttractive picture of Romanism are
Leap Over the Wall, by Monica
ldwin, and *Seven Storey Mountain,*
Thomas Merton. These books were
scussed on pages 7 and 8 of this
agazine.

See also *Romanism and the Gos-*
l, by C. A. Anderson Scott, and
rimer for Protestants, by James
astings Nichols. This latter book
as discussed in the Jan.-March,
951, issue of CROSSROADS. It would
interesting now to reread this.

Discuss the following statement of
r. Kenneth J. Foreman (*The Pres-*
yterian Outlook, September 25,
950):

"Over the gateway to the monastery
Gethsemani are the words 'Pax
ntrantibus'—peace to those who
nter. It is indeed a peaceful en-
osure. Fancy living the rest of your
atural life free from newspapers,
lesmen, bills, politics, taxes, family
problems, traffic regulations; shut off from small talk, advertising, radio, and the draft; in a place where every other resident is as much devoted to God as you are, where prayer and praise are the main business of life, and where the cultivation of the grace of humility is the only possible ambition. One would think such a place would be crowded with the applicants; and so it is.

"To be sure, peace is not the same thing as ease. The monks who live here are Cistercians of the strictest rule. They take St. Benedict without watering down his austerities. The company of women and children is denied them, of course; they live on two meals a day during the summer, and on one meal a day from September till spring, though the meals are not what most of us would recognize as such. *They sleep in tiny, bare cubicles on straw mattresses,* the abbot in no better one than anyone else. *Never was there an American jail with fewer comforts.* The only look of luxury, even of comfort, about the place, is in the altar in the bare chapel, and the very beautiful service books used by the choir. No wonder a poet who knows little of life but Columbia and the confused cocktail-world of literary fashion, welcomes the peace and quiet of the place; no wonder his book about it becomes popular.

"Nevertheless, a Protestant Christian, with all due admiration for the tenacity of these recluses (for a monk may live there for years without having a single conversation with his neighbors at table or in the dormitory), still emerges with some reservations, some questions which the guestmaster's remarks did not cover.

"Living under so strict a regimen, one learns humility by being humiliated. . . .

"Does one leave sin behind when one leaves the world behind? Any gathering of ministers or missionaries is a gathering of devoted people; but even if presbytery were improved by allowing no one to talk, would sin be thereby eliminated? Shut up in a single cell, walking in silence among silent brethren, is a man proof against the deadly sins?

"Are women and children such enemies of the good life that one can live nearer to heaven without them? The harried father of six, the tired schoolteacher, may think so; a monk thinks so. But is it true? Jesus did not seem to think so."[3]

[3] From *The Presbyterian Outlook,* 1 North
h Street, Richmond 19, Virginia. Re-
rinted by permission.

Books in Review

(Any book reviewed in this magazine may be ordered through your nearest Westminster Book Store.)

Books and supplies listed here and elsewhere in this magazine are carefully checked for their availability and price, but unfortunately there is a considerable time between original listing and publication. For this reason prices are subject to change.

The New Singing Time, A Book of Songs for Little Children, by Satis N. Coleman. (The John Day Company. 32 pages. $2.50.)

This is a well-illustrated book of tuneful, interesting, and idea-provoking songs. The accompaniments are well adapted to the words of the songs, and the illustrations are unusual in that they have so much action and appeal to a child. The subjects of the songs are selected within the range of the preschool child. From trying them on my own children, I conclude that the work is a trifle immature for the school-age child but fine for kindergarten and nursery.—*Jean Harmon.*

It's Fun to Teach, by Victor Hoag. (Morehouse-Gorham Co. 199 pages. $3.25.)

This book has been written to present church school teaching as a continuing and fascinating hobby for concerned Christians. It is written for not only prospective teachers but also those now engaged in this fascinating and rewarding work. The author has included many ideas for improving teaching techniques, and suggestions for dealing with specific problems of discipline, curriculum, teacher training, and class procedure. Prospective teachers and persons now teaching should realize that good teaching comes mainly from experience; therefore, they must not let the desirable but very high standards set up by the author discourage them.—*Adair B. Gould.*

The World's Greatest Christmas Stories, edited by Eric Posselt. (Prentice-Hall. 426 pages. $5.00.)

The distinction of this compilation is that the stories come from twenty-three different nations. Dickens' "Christmas Carol" is here, along with O. Henry's "Gift of the Magi," and Tolstoy's "Where Love Is, There God Is Also." The rest of the stories are unfamiliar and unimpressive. [*G.L.H.*]

The Secretary of Evangelism for the Presbyterian Church tells how an adult group can conduct a fruitful program of "fellowship evangelism."

How *You* Can Be an Evangelist!

By George E. Sweazey

During the 1950 General Assembly, in Cincinnati, a victim of amnesia was picked up by the police. He was apparently a man of intelligence and culture, but he had no idea who he was, where he was from, or why he was in Cincinnati. The police communicated with the Assembly in the hope that someone there might recognize him.

All around us are people who do not know who they are, why they are here, or what life is for. The church could tell them. Frustration, bewilderment, and lack of purpose are the diseases of modern minds. Forty-nine per cent of the people in this country profess no religious faith, and many on church rolls have only a nominal adherence. People were born to have clear purposes that make each day worth living. The boredom of those who have missed their purpose drives them to substitutes in sex, stark materialism, or the frantic pursuit of trifling goals.

A few years ago Presbyterian ministers were asked whether they had evidence that the people who joined their church felt that this step had made a distinct difference in their lives. The flood of replies showed that our seemingly sedate parishes are the scenes of amazing miracles: "She was a complaining, unhappy woman. Now she has found new joy and new life." "He was invited to play it straight with God (he hadn't been) and with his wife (he hadn't been). He has not missed church worship in two months, and there is a new happiness in his home." "I can't risk identifying people, but deep changes have taken place—despair giving place to hope, trickery to honesty, indifference to sacrifice." "Two alcoholics have come into our church as new men—devout, humble, sincere witnesses." Even more impressive than such striking stories is the evidence of the vast number of ordinary people who have discovered that life has heights and depths, and happiness and interest they had never even guessed before. What people believe *is* important, and the church *does* make a difference.

Think of the person you know best who has no clear religious faith. Would that person be better off with a faith? Does he or she have any need for the daily consciousness of Christ? If your Christian belief has meant anything to you, you can be sure it could mean just as much or more to the one of whom you are thinking.

The imperative for evangelism, of course, comes from the gospel itself. A recent book by D. T. Niles, of the World Council of Churches, makes this emphatically clear. Mr. Niles gives a theology of evangelism in which he shows that the need for propagating the Christian faith is an essential part of the faith itself. This book, *That They May Have Life*, will be one of the "Books for Christian Study" in a later issue of Crossroads.

What?

But what is a good method of evangelism to use in our churches? That question brings us face to face with a peculiar condition. Many Presbyterians are in the position of believing in evangelism *in general*, without believing in any evangelism *in particular*. They are eager to help more people find what they have found. But just what they can be doing about it today and tomorrow has eluded them. The past three years have seen more people join the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., than in any similar period in our Church's history. This has happened because, in the New Life Movement, the church members have been discovering the immediate, practical ways by which they can be helping people come to Christian faith and living. *One of these ways is offered through the fellowship of church groups.*

Every healthy organization of a local church—the women's association, the men's club, the young adult group—has a tremendous evangelistic potential in the fact that it is a relatively small group, uniting people in friendship and in service. The power of this fellowship can be tremendously effective in reaching people outside the group and drawing them to the church's faith and membership. It can be a means to the end of that greater fellowship between a man and his God, as God is known and experienced in the worship and work of the congregation.

This idea of using human fellowship as an evangelistic device is as old as the book of The Acts. There it tells that "the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved." (*Acts 2:47*, R.S.V.) Its modern adaptation—through which we can be instruments in the hands of God as he adds to his Church today—is one of the most hopeful developments in American church life. It means using by plan and on purpose a power that otherwise is wasted through hit or miss.

It works. These quotations from letters are typical: "Our young adult

up in five months has brought
en young married people into the
rch." "Their calls were over fifty
cent successful, much to their
azement." "Calling by the various
anizations has more than doubled
church attendance!" "It wrought
nders for the organization, stepping
interest, attendance, and participa-
n in a most remarkable way."
ven years ago this was an old peo-
's church. It is now a young peo-
's church—[because of the calling
gram of the younger members]."

ow?

The first thing to ask ourselves is
y anyone should be interested in
church and in our church in par-
ular. At the same time we ought to
nsider if the church is interested in
m, and if so why. This will call for
probing of our faith and serious
-examination of our life. To that
i, the following steps are sug-
ted:

1. The group should engage in
ble study and a study of the
urch's faith to determine its pur-
se in fellowship evangelism. The
sons in CROSSROADS last year and
s year will be helpful in such a
dy. In addition, there is the book-
, *Winning Young People for Christ*
e list of "Supplies"), which has
cellent material for adults as well.
aterial from the foregoing para-
aphs of this article could also serve
resources for a program that in-
ires into the meaning of evangelism.

2. The group must examine itself.
ere is no use bringing in new mem-
rs if they will immediately drop out
cause the programs are dull or the
oup has no clear idea of its own pur-
se. There is not much use in trying
hold new members unless the group
something more than a cut-rate
cial club. It must ask, "Will new-
mers be getting an understanding
Christianity from our programs
d our fellowship?" "Will we make
e church seem appealing to them?"
is self-rating process also has a
lfish advantage. It will help the
oup to recognize its weaknesses and
ake improvements which may be
ng overdue. The self-rating study
ted (see "Supplies") may be used,
the group may wish to prepare
s own.

3. A list of people to be reached
ust be assembled. It has many
urces—friends and relatives of
embers of the group and of the
church, new arrivals in the community, a neighborhood religious census, visitors to Sunday services, pastor's contacts, the church prospect list, parents of church school pupils.

There should be a separate file card for each person or couple, with all useful information and the result of every contact noted on it. These cards are not to be taken from the church. Assignments are made by copying from them.

4. Visitors are selected from among the members—either singly or by couples. Their number will depend on the number of prospects. They go out to give an enthusiastic description of the group, with an invitation to join, and an offer to have someone bring the new people to the next meeting.

5. The visitors meet to be trained and to receive their assignments. They call in pairs. A married couple make a good team. They try to get a definite promise to join the group, or at least a promise to attend the next meeting. This saves the results of the call from being lost in vague good intentions. Cards (see "Supplies") are useful for recording a definite decision. The report of each call is written on the assignment card and turned in before the deadline date, within a week or ten days. The minister or some other experienced caller gives the instructions. At the meeting the visitors may enjoy practicing on each other. They can also be given mimeographed instructions or the printed "Instructions for Youth Visitors" (see "Supplies"). They should start out with prayer.

6. A welcome meeting is the immediate event at which the calls are aimed. It has a specially attractive program, with definite provision to make the newcomers feel wanted and at home. Some member should offer to bring each one who is coming for the first time.

7. The follow-up is important because it is the number who come to the second and third meetings which indicates the final success. The group should take special care to put its best foot forward for the next few meetings. For two or three months, telephone the new numbers to be sure they are coming, and have someone offer to come with them.

Try soon to give all new members some responsibility—not enough to frighten them, but enough to make them feel useful.

Try to interest the new members in the church services and in other church activities.

Give them the feel of Christian friendship in contacts between meetings—sometimes in the homes of the members.

Have programs on such topics as Christian beliefs and the importance of the Church.

Keep looking toward that great time when the new members of the group will come through its fellowship into the central fellowship of those who have pledged themselves to Christ and are a part of his Church.

Supplies

The following supplies for your work of evangelism can be ordered from your nearest Presbyterian Distribution Service center (located at each Westminster Book Store):

Our Evangelistic Ability. A Self-Rating Study. 1 cent each.
Instructions for Youth Visitors. Free.
Prospect and Assignment Cards. 30 cents per 100.
Organization Invitation Acceptance Cards. 50 cents per 100.
The Neighborhood Religious Census. 1 cent each.
Winning Young People for Christ. 10 cents each.

Program Helps for Study of This Subject

(Continued from page 80)

will win which delivers the goods spiritually and materially"?

2. If there were a Communist teacher in your local high school, would you seek to remove him? Why or why not?

3. Have any public figures in your community been called Communists? Was the charge justified?

4. Can you give reasons why a conservative businessman would oppose Communism? How would these reasons differ from those of a trade union leader, who is likewise opposed to Communism?

5. What do we mean by the term "the Communist Party line"? How can we identify the "line" on any given issue?

6. Should Communists be granted full freedom of speech and political action? Where should they be restrained, if at all?

7. Can we restrain Communists in America without harming our tradition of civil liberties?

Bar-Non
FELLOWSHI

"Bar-None Ranch" was the scene of a Western-style party for the Tyro Club of the First Presbyterian Church, Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin. Rev. William D. Barr and his active gang of young adults got out the saddles, ten-gallon hats, dungarees, and lariats so familiar to the small fry of our day, and then proceeded to decorate the church social hall in an appropriate way for an evening of Western fun.

Advance publicity had kept the people aware of the event for several weeks. They had seen the posters in the church entrance and had received announcements by mail. The committee had been at work for some time, preparing the games, refreshments, decorations, and favors.

The more than fifty cowpunchers and lassies who came to "Bar-None Ranch" were met by a welcoming committee and appropriately tagged with miniature cowboy hats constructed of colored paper. No one was to be lost or nameless in this crowd of easily identified people.

Some of the fellows got slabs from the sawmill and constructed a corral, complete with saddles and spurs. The refreshment counter was dressed up with wheels and became a chuck wagon for the night. The gang

anch
ARTY

ore plaid shirts, neckerchiefs, and cowboy hats. Everyone was in the Western mood.

The fun included folk games like "Jennie Crack orn," square sets, a relay race with the not so dignied folks mounted on sawhorses, and a hilarious race which contestants passed a cowboy hat name card a nose-lip relay. Unfortunately, before the photogpher could shoot it, the tug o' war ended unceremoniously, with the entire gang landing on the floor two disorderly heaps.

The mixers got everyone well acquainted, and by he time they gathered round the ole chuck wagon or chow, they were chatting and chinning like one ig happy family. Much later, when the party had roken up, a cleanup committee stayed to put the place shape again. The women washed dishes while their usbands decommissioned the decorations and swept he floor.

Said Mr. Barr: "Everyone was happy about the ntire evening. We've had requests for more such arties soon. I'm convinced of one thing—preparation nd care in planning the details of the entire evening nake for a grand time for all. Our committee agrees n that point."

"Come, Thou Long-expected Jesus"

A SERVICE FOR AN ADVENT SUNDAY

ADVENT is that period of the Christian year which precedes Christmas. It begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas; this year that Sunday is December 2. It is a season of penitence; it is also a time of earnest expectation. The imagery most appropriate to its observance, as the many Advent hymns show, is from the Old Testament. "Captive Israel" reminds us of our own captivity to sin and our need for a Deliverer; "the people that walked in darkness," a phrase familiar to all lovers of Handel's *Messiah,* is from the prophecy of Isaiah and speaks of our hope that we, like the ancient exiles, may see "a great light." The brief service that follows suggests a way in which a class or some other group might make use of this theme in worship.

For a fresh yet devotional approach to this, the service could be conducted in this manner: Let the readers and participants in the service remain seated among the group. Those who lead in Scripture and prayer need not rise or even stand in front of the worshipers. Instead, they can take part in the worship simply by contributing their portion at the appointed times. This scheme calls for careful planning (even though it appears easy and informal when done), but it can be impressively effective. Should the members of the group desire to do so, they can train a speaking choir to participate in choric reading of the Scriptures.

THE SERVICE

PRELUDE: "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel."

ANTIPHONAL CALL TO WORSHIP:

First Reader—

"The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him,
To all that call upon him in truth.

Second Reader—

"He will fulfill the desire of them that fear him:
He also will hear their cry, and will save them."

HYMN: "Lift Up Your Heads."

SCRIPTURES: Old Testament Lesson: *Ps. 51* (may be read responsively). New Testament Lesson: *Phil. 2: 5-11; 4: 4-7.*

PROTESTANT CHANCEL IN KOBLENZ, GERMANY. RECONSTRUCTED AFTER BOMB DAMAGE

PRAYERS (each prayer may be read by a different person):

"Lord, we beseech Thee, give ear to our prayers, and lighten the darkness of our hearts, by Thy gracious visitation; Who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen." (Ancient collect for Advent.)

"Almighty and everlasting God, who orderest all things in heaven and in earth, and who didst make all ages a preparation for the coming of Thy Son: Prepare us by Thy Holy Spirit for the coming of Him whom Thou dost send, that we may behold His glory. . . Amen."

"Prepare our hearts, O God, for the coming of Jesus Christ, Thy Son. By the memory of the world's great need of a Saviour, deepen our joy in making ready for the anniversary of His lowly birth at Bethlehem. By true faith in Him as the Divine Redeemer, strengthen our loyalty and our hope, that at His appearing in glory, we may welcome Him as our risen Lord, our royal Master, the Saviour of our souls. Amen."

HYMN: "Come, Thou Long-expected Jesus."

A BIDDING PRAYER [1] (the reader suggests the subject for silent prayer):

"Let us pray for the entire world, hungering and thirsting for the spirit of Christ. . . .

"Let us pray that peace and righteousness might pervade all humanity as the season of good will again approaches. . . .

"Let us pray that the spirit of God will rule among the nations, establishing concord and mutual service, and binding people with people, race with race in brotherhood. . . .

"Let us also pray for those who at this season plan to give happiness to others, that they might themselves realize happiness in their tasks. . . .

"Let us pray that those who must bear added burdens in order to provide cheer for others will be sustained in their endeavors. . . .

"Let us pray for all homes and families that affections may be rekindled and loyalties may be renewed in the gladness of the season. . . .

"Let us pray for Christ's Church, that there might come into it a new spirit of devotion to the Kingdom of our Lord. . . .

"Let us ask that we might be freed from all concerns for the things which matter little, and that we might be kept true to those things which matter greatly—justice and mercy and faith. . . .

"Let us pray for those hearts in which there can be little room for joy because sorrow has come to them, asking in intercession that the Christ who has been the sharer of their joys and their comrade in toil now come to them as the Great Comforter so that in him they will find the peace that has no end."

HYMN: "Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers."

"And now, as our Saviour Christ has taught us, we humbly pray: 'Our Father, . . .'"

BENEDICTION.

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[1] Adapted from a prayer by Morgan Phelps Noyes, found in *Prayers for Services*, compiled and edited by Morgan Phelps Noyes. Used by permission of Charles Scribner's Sons.

THE DIRECTOR DISCUSSES

Balanced Programs

Dear Friends:

It's a pleasure to talk with you in this column about a number of things that have been on my mind for some time. Let me begin by asking you some questions: Does the adult group in your church have a variety of programs that constitute a balance during a year's time? Or do you have almost nothing but social gatherings on the one hand or nothing but speakers on the other? Again, do your programs have a close tie with the faith and the life of the church? Or is this ignored? In visiting many churches over the last three years, I found that some church groups cannot be distinguished from the luncheon and civic clubs in the same community. Their programs and activities give no indication of a relationship to the church other than the fact that they meet in the church building. To my way of thinking, this is an indication of a lack of knowledge about the exciting programs that can be planned from a Christian point of view, to say nothing of what the church is and what it is for. This is exactly the purpose of the program section of CROSSROADS. In it we *suggest* programs for your group that are distinctively Christian and that relate to your church's life and work. It is our hope that the officers, program chairmen, and all of you, will use this section as you plan ahead. To be sure, every group wants some excellent speakers and some top-notch parties during the year; but to depend solely on one or the other is often fatal for the group itself. Group participation adds vitality to a program that not even a gifted speaker can give.

Although social gatherings are extremely important (and excellent suggestions for them appear in the program section), a steady diet of these soon becomes uninteresting to the crowd. A more significant purpose is necessary—one that will find focus in the program and projects. It is my conviction that people are hungry for programs that "hit home" and that introduce some of the resources available in *Christian Faith and Life.*

Not long ago a group of young adults, talking about their programs, said, "Our couples club should be a *part of* the church, not *apart* from it." This is the principle which underlies all that you find here in study-action programs, worship, and fellowship.

Sincerely yours,
RAYMOND V. KEARNS, JR.
Director of the Department of Adult Work

FILMS FOR CHRISTMAS

Sandy and Andy dropped into the office of Rev. Monroe Drew, Jr., the other day. His Department of Audio-Visual Education has lots of ideas for Christmas programs. It previewed some films and discussed several types of movies for the Yuletide season. Sandy took notes, which follow:

In the holiday season that lies ahead, we should be using audio-visual presentations to help in the recreational as well as in the devotional aspects of our programs.

For instance, it is possible to have such excellent Christmas subjects as *Scrooge* (Charles Dickens' *Christmas Carol*), shown in 16 mm. version as well as many other outstanding entertainment films. In large American cities you will find listed in the classified telephone directory the distributors of 16 mm. entertainment subjects. There are several commercial libraries with branch offices in many cities, which cater exclusively to the 16 mm. market.

Charles Tazewell's beautiful Christmas story of *The Littlest Angel* has now been given a screen version. This is the story of the "lowest" of the angels, his escapades and adventures, and his humble gift to the Christ-child. Its running time is thirteen minutes, its daily rental fee is $5.00 in black and white, $10.00 in color, and it is available through Ideal Pictures, Department C-111, 65 East South Water Street, Chicago 1, Ill., or any of the many branches of this commercial library. *The Littlest Angel* has also been made into a slide set and is part of the S.V.E. (Society for Visual Education) library. Any commercial distributor should be able to order this for you; it is also available through Westminster Book Stores. This set is in color and consists of 13 slides. The sale price is $6.50.

The Concordia Publishing House offers two silent filmstrips, in color, through their Visual Aids Service, which takes the Christmas story and paraphrases it by means of simple titles, superimposed over quite acceptable art work. These two strips are entitled *The Wise Men* and *The Birth of Jesus.* They will afford excellent opportunities for experimentation with musical background and simple script writing, since the screen titles may be read very quickly. After an appropriate pause for that reading, local church narrators are able to make interesting elaborations on the basic story.

The Society for Visual Education has also produced some slide films in a holiday series, which include *The Night Before Christmas, The Fir Tree* (a part of Andersen's fairy tale series), *The Little Match Girl* (also one of Andersen's stories), and *The Little Shepherd's Gift.* They also have available Henry van Dyke's famous story of *The Other Wise Man.*

You won't want to neglect the possibility of projecting your carols on the screen. The S.V.E. has produced a number of attractive carol strips

that are well illustrated and provide the words to many of the well-known carols. A listing of those available follows: "O Come, All Ye Faithful"; "The First Noel"; "While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks"; "O Little Town of Bethlehem"; "Silent Night! Holy Night!"

We have concentrated upon providing information concerning Christmas, because it is wise to make your arrangements regarding these subjects as early as possible. A "last minute" shopping rush always occurs in the audio-visual field, too, at Christmas time!

Slowly but surely, however, subjects are being produced that help a great deal in the other important seasons. A careful perusal of the Religious Film Association catalog should give you a number of ideas outside the Christmas theme. We remind you also that the audio-visual *Vanguard* service (available free from the Board of Christian Education) is a bulletin that contains many helpful suggestions concerning program planning.

A PROJECT FOR CHRISTMAS

For those who know the real meaning of Christmas, this sacred season is a time not so much of merry-making or of gift-getting as it is a renewed opportunity for expressing our concern and love for our fellow men. It becomes a season for the remembrance of others: family, friends, fellow workers, and needy people.

The needy in particular are likely to attract the interest of church groups who, together, can do far more for them than individuals could do separately. This leads them to plan Christmas projects for special ways to help others. But at times these special projects have been no better executed than the hackneyed procedure of searching out names of deserving families and then unceremoniously dropping off a basket of groceries on some doorsteps December 24.

CROSSROADS' suggestion this year for group Christmas projects is to pack a holiday parcel for a missions station or group. Here is a plan that gives direction to the desire for a Christmas project. It insures a worthy recipient for the gifts, and it provides a meaningful activity for the group. Such a plan includes possibilities that come in all shapes and sizes, from wax crayons to station wagons. Suggestions both for the addresses of missions and for the gifts themselves can be procured from the Secretary for Specific Work of the Board of National Missions or from the Office of Special Gifts of The Board of Foreign Missions. Both offices are located at 156 Fifth Avenue, New York 10, N. Y.

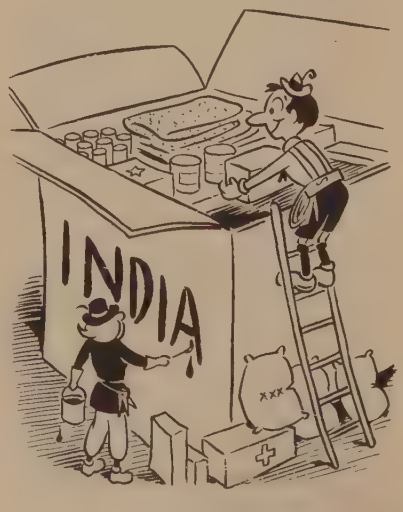
It is important that an adult group begin to do this type of Christmas shopping early. By starting inquiry and planning at least by early October, it is possible to clear gifts that will reach even the faraway stations by Christmas. Note how important it is to clear with the Mission Boards before sending gifts. Not to do so means that some stations get more gifts than they can use and others get none at all. Intricacies of customs, duty fees, shipping laws of foreign lands, and information about particular needs are best known to these centers. They keep constant contact with near and far missions of the Church. Short cuts in transportation arrangements or the latest news on rapidly changing customs laws will be known to them. By first writing to the Boards there is assurance that the mission stations will receive the proper presents for their situation.

Even those churches which support specific work in National or Foreign Missions will do well to consult the Boards before making their Christmas plans. This applies even when personal suggestions come from the pastor, missions chairman, or church members who may have visited the missions themselves.

The list of needs in any Presbyterian mission is always longer than the list of supplies. The requests are of the utility class, exclusively, never luxuries. This is no place for a sterling silver coffee service! But workbook materials for children, crayons, pencils, scissors, paints, and colored paper are amazingly helpful to teachers. The average person can hardly appreciate what value common articles such as thread, needles, knives, and pens have in some areas. Relief supplies of clothing and medicines are urgently needed in certain quarters, and library books and dormitory equipment in others. Surgical instruments, kitchen utensils, magazine subscriptions—the possibilities are endless.

It is literally true in many areas that unless the missionaries provide Christmas celebrations, there would be no observance at all. For all too many people, the gifts received on these occasions are the only ones offered. Whether your group is sending personal gifts to the missionary, special equipment for the mission station, or relief supplies to the mission's indigent, the help will be gratefully received.

(Certainly it needs to be said that in no case should such extra giving of parcels be substituted for the regular benevolences of the church. First of all, that quota should be met by the congregation, that the continuing work of the Church and its mission will not be curtailed.)



The Featured Programs

During January, February, and March we are suggesting the following programs for your group:

Have We a Dependable Press?

The Meaning of Epiphany and Lent

Church Steeples Over America

A program on comity. (Save the article on page 3 of this issue for that program too.)

The "Books for Christian Study" next quarter are two inspiring devotional classics: *The Pilgrim's Progress*, by John Bunyan, and *The Journal of John Woolman*. Begin reading them now!

For Church Officers

ELDERS, DEACONS, TRUSTEES

Social Action in the Local Church

By Clifford Earle and Margaret E. Kuhn

The following extended article has been written by Mr. Earle and Miss Kuhn, of the Division of Social Education and Action, as part of the church officers' training program of the Church. It outlines the areas of social concern and suggests ways in which local churches may work in these areas. It is hoped that church officers will study this article carefully and incorporate its suggestions into their local program.

I. AREAS OF SOCIAL CONCERN

Social action is a natural result of Christian faith. It is part of the *works* without which *faith* is meaningless and dead. The Christian basis of social action may be asserted in several ways:

1. Our faith affirms the sovereignty of God, the absolute Lordship of God in all of life. Long ago John Calvin pointed out that to believe in the sovereignty of God is to believe that God's laws and God's judgments stand over every phase of human endeavor. The corollary is clear—everything that concerns people is a concern of the Church.

2. Christian social action is involved in the very nature of the God we worship and serve. His purposes move in human history. To know him is to serve him, and to serve him is to seek and do his will in all of life.

3. Christians, by their Lord's teaching and example, affirm the dignity of man, the essential and infinite worth of human personality. Every person is a child of God, an object of God's love and care.

4. For Christians, right and wrong in social situations and institutions depend on what they do to persons. Whatever sustains and enhances a man's life and worth as a child of God, and binds him to his fellow men in

true fellowship, is right and should be encouraged. Whatever, in any way or to any degree, keeps a man from being all that God wants him to be, or sets him against his neighbor in denial of real community, is wrong and should be rejected and resisted by every follower of Christ.

5. Personal commitment to Jesus Christ must involve social concern and action. Being a Christian means the acceptance not only of a religious faith but also of Christian teachings that apply in all areas of human life. A complete disciple of Jesus Christ is concerned with working for a Christian world as well as living a Christian life.

Social Service and Social Action

There is an important distinction between social service and social action. The two terms have sometimes been used interchangeably, but they have come to represent quite clearly defined and different kinds of Christian activity.

Christian social service embraces the Church's ministry for the relief of human misery and misfortune. From the time of its origin in Jerusalem, the Christian Church has engaged in ministries of mercy as a characteristic practice—establishing orphanages and homes for the aged, building hospitals and settlements, providing food and shelter for the destitute, assisting the victims of disaster.

Christian social action is the effort of the Church to influence social and economic conditions so that they will better serve human needs rather than create a vast burden of misery that must be carried as a public responsibility. It seeks to get at the root of the difficulty. It deals with specific issues that bear upon human welfare, such as fair play for the workingman, equal employment opportunities, ethical business practices, and wholesome living conditions.

Social service furnishes ambulances and hospitals for the victims of disaster at the foot of the economic precipice. Social action asks why a precipice lies across the path of so many millions of human beings and seeks to bridge the chasm with economic opportunity and security. It is not surprising that the Church is shifting its emphasis from social service to social action.

Areas of Concern

Leaders in local churches sometimes say that there are no pressing social issues calling for action. Yet newspapers are filled with stories and reports reflecting social needs about which churches ought to be deeply concerned. Even in the most favored communities there are things to be done in the realm of social action. Wherever a wrong or a need exists, Christians are confronted with an obligation to do what they can to right the wrong or meet the need.

For the purpose of classifying issues, it is convenient to list six areas of social concern: home and community relations, the use of beverage alcohol, the church and economic life, government and citizenship, racial and cultural relations, and world order.

Family and community life. Christianity looks upon the family as the fundamental unit of human society. The Church emphasizes the sanctity of marriage and seeks, by every possible means, to strengthen the foundations of stable home life. The rising divorce rate, the relaxing of moral standards in family life, and the diminishing importance of the home in the lives of many Americans are matters of Christian concern, and call for serious study and action.

In this area such concerns as adequate housing for everyone, high-grade public education, and wholesome recreation are valid objects of Christian social action.

Alcoholic beverages. The Church has long recognized that the use of alcoholic beverages is a major source of human woe.

The historic position of the Presbyterian Church is, *first,* that only voluntary total abstinence is consonant with the Christian way of life; *secondly,* that the liquor industry should be brought under public control; and *thirdly,* that churches should be alert and intelligent in ministering to the victims of alcohol.

Economic life. Long ago the prophets pronounced the judgment of God upon all who practiced economic injustice. Down the centuries the Church has been concerned with what people do for a living and how social groups deal with one another. The Church today cannot be indifferent to the relationships between labor and management, farmer and consumer. The economic forces that make for inequality, poverty, exploitation, and

class division call for study and action in the prophetic tradition of Christianity.

Christian citizenship. Many of the social changes and improvements that the Church advocates can be accomplished best through legislation. It is true, of course, that neither men nor conditions can be legislated into goodness. Yet the steady improvement of social conditions involves laws and governmental action to encourage and protect desirable practices, and to regulate or restrict undesirable practices.

In influencing legislation, Christians may act in their private capacity as citizens; or they may engage in organized group action under the auspices of the Church. In either case, they will keep themselves informed on state and national legislation that has a bearing on social issues.

Christians should remember that the clue to what is right in legislation is to be found, not in personal interest or in popular opinion, but in the will of God as revealed in Christ.

Human rights and race relations. Race prejudice is a major problem in American life. It is an issue that challenges the sincerity of our Christian profession. The indignities and inequalities to which millions of our fellow Americans are daily subjected because of racial and cultural differences are a clear denial of the teachings of Christ.

The study of racial and cultural relations in America, and appropriate action against segregation and discrimination, have been urged by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. The goal is "a nonsegregated Church in a nonsegregated society."

World order. Christians dream of a world in which men dwell together in righteousness and peace. In war, and in its aftermath of suffering and discord, they see the negation of the Christian gospel of love and redemption. The securing of peace, international justice, and good will is the most important task confronting mankind today.

The Church has a large stake in the success of the United Nations, in the wise control of atomic energy, in the strengthening of international trade, in economic and social recovery of the nations of the world, in the friendly solution of disagreements between the United States and Russia, and in the universal disarmament and collective security under the United Nations.

II. FROM CONCERN TO ACTION

The program begins with a recognized social need. In every community there are undesirable conditions about which Christians should feel an obligation. Often a shocking situation serves to focus attention, arouse indignation, and demand correction. It may be a tenement fire in which lives are lost, or the uncovering of gambling in a neighborhood poolroom frequented by young people, or the use of violence in a local labor dispute, or the desecration of a synagogue. These are exceptional situations, but a study of any one of them will disclose a series of related problems and may be the beginning of a broad and constructive program of social education and action.

In addition to the social needs that appear on the doorstep of every church, there are issues of national and international character that may also stimulate study and action. Programs of social education and action have been instituted in many churches through an interest in the United Nations, or in race relations, or in a political campaign with its partisan claims and counterclaims, or in displaced persons, or in labor legislation.

The annual pronouncements of the General Assembly on social issues suggest many problems of contemporary interest that are recommended to the churches for study and action.

Organization Is Important

The General Assembly on several occasions has urged the formation of social education and action committees in local churches. There are

veral ways in which this can be ne:

1. *Persons carrying responsibility r social education and action in urch societies may meet informally plan church-wide activities.* This an is recommended where it is im-ssible or unwise to set up a formal urch committee on social education d action. The initiative for calling e informal meetings may be taken the pastor of the church, by a ember of the session, or by some-e who is responsible for social ac-on in one of the organizations. nvited to participate in the meetings ould be the Outreach Commission hairmen of both the youth group and e young adult group, the social edu-ation and action secretary of the omen's organization, and the per-ons in other societies who are respon-ble for this phase of the work. The nformal group would report its plan the session for approval, and in very way would seek the co-peration and support of the church's esignated leaders.

2. *The session may appoint a com-ittee composed of representatives rom various organizations and age roups in the church.* A member of he session would be the convener or hairman, and the committee would eport through him directly to the ses-ion.

All adult and youth organizations f the church would be represented n the committee—the session, the oard of trustees, the board of dea-ons, the women's association, the en's brotherhood, the organizations or young people and for young dults, the youth and adult depart-ents of the Sunday church school. The pastor of the church would be n ex-officio member of the commit-ee, and in many churches would be ts actual leader. In an average hurch, the committee would have rom six to ten members. To the com-ittee may be added persons who ave special interests or skills in so-ial action.

3. *The social education and action committee may be set up by the church's board (or council) of Chris-tian education.* In many churches the educational program is planned and directed by a special council or board. Subordinate committees are ap-pointed to supervise particular phases of the program. One of these may be the committee on social education and action, which is made up of represen-tatives from various organizations and people who are especially interested in this phase of the program.

Chairman—a key person. Much of the success of the social education and action committee in the local church depends on the leadership abilities of the chairman. Besides having a genuine interest in this vital phase of the church's program, an effective chairman will (1) understand the basis of the social concern of the Christian Church; (2) know

the stand of the General Assembly on social issues; (3) be open-minded and objective in his approach to social questions; (4) be able to work with people, to win and hold their confidence as a leader, to help and encourage them in carrying out committee assignments; (5) know how to plan and conduct a meeting, how to lead group discussions; and (6) understand the importance of cooperating with the minister, the session, and leaders of other groups in the church.

Resource leaders. In most communities there are persons who are especially qualified to serve as consultants or resource leaders for the church's committee on social education and action. They may be teachers in the local high school or in a nearby college, heads of social-service agencies in the community, specialists connected with local or state government agencies, labor-union leaders, and so forth.

Care should be used in seeking the help of specialists. Only those should be asked to serve as resource leaders who are (1) sympathetic with the spiritual mission of the Church, (2) in substantial agreement with the social ideals of the Church as expressed in the social pronouncements of the General Assembly, and (3) really competent to give specialized assistance in the fields of social concern in which the committee is interested.

Orientation of the Committee

Often a newly formed local committee on social education and action finds it necessary to spend considerable time in becoming oriented to its task. Several methods are suggested: (1) The committee can meet for a series of *coaching conferences* with the pastor of the church, if he is qualified, or with a competent lay leader in Christian social action. (2) The committee can hold *training sessions* in which the members themselves, taking turns, report the results of their own study of selected literature in the various fields of social action. General Assembly social pronouncements and the publications of the Division of Social Education and Action would receive special attention. (3) *Interviews* can be arranged with leaders in the community who are working in the areas in which the committee is interested. (4) *Field trips* can be planned in which the committee members see how other people in the community live and work, how young people spend their leisure time, how social-service agencies and institutions are run, how the courts deal with various types of offenders, how the local government functions. (5) The committee can attend a *workshop* or *conference* on social education and action sponsored by the presbytery. (6) Members of the committee can attend a *summer leadership school* in which a course of social action is offered. (7) The committee can arrange *to have members of the presbytery committee on social education and action visit* their church for counseling purposes.

How to Proceed

It is important, from the beginning, for the members of the committee to be regular readers of the official Presbyterian publication—*Social Progress*, published by the Division of Social Education and Action, a monthly (except July and August) pocket-size magazine with articles and information on current social issues, and *Presbyterian Life*, published by the authority of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. Curriculum magazines, including CROSSROADS, also have articles on social problems, and the social responsibility of Christians is constantly emphasized in the lessons. Furthermore, every committee mem-

ber should have copies of the social pronouncements of the General Assembly and other publications of the Division of Social Education and Action.

The Division is a rather recent creation of the General Assembly. In 1936, the General Assembly directed the Board of Christian Education to establish a Department of Social Education and Action, which later became the Division of Social Education and Action.

Committee meetings should be held regularly—at least once a month throughout the year. The chairman, in consultation with committee members, should prepare an agenda in advance of each meeting, listing the items to be included in the meeting. Every meeting should begin with a short devotional service. Often the "Sanctuary" section in the current issue of *Social Progress* can be used in this service. Many committees find it helpful to include in each meeting a half-hour period of advanced training or coaching in which one of the members, or a guest, presents information about recent developments in one of the areas of social concern. There should also be a careful review and evaluation of social action programs and activities in the church during the past month. The agenda should include reports from members of the committee who carry special assignments. The committee should have carefully chosen objectives, which the group as a whole decide upon. The committee should be organized so that every member is assigned a definite responsibility.

The Task

There is almost no limit to the kinds of activities that may be used in the local program of social education and action. Some of the activities used successfully in one church, however, may not serve at all in another church. Leaders will select the methods that are most suited to the people with whom they work and to the ends they seek. The methods described in this section can be used in any group within the church, as well as by the local committee responsible for the church program.

The work of the local committee on social education and action usually falls into three categories—presenting information on social issues, promoting the study of social problems, and developing programs of social action.

III. THE LARGER STRATEGY

The local program of social education and action is part of a larger strategy by which Christians, working in many churches and in various ways, seek to extend the authority of Christ in human affairs.

Every effort should be made to correlate the local program with parallel activities in the community and with the social action emphases of the denomination. A close working relationship should be maintained with the social education and action committees of the presbytery and the synod, and with the Division of Social Education and Action of the Board of Christian Education. The local committee should be friendly and co-operative in its relationships with corresponding committees in community and state church councils and in the National Council of Churches.

Presbytery. Even though the presbytery committee itself exercises no real jurisdiction over the local church committee or its program, the local church leaders should co-operate in every possible way with the leaders in charge of the presbytery's program of Christian social action. This means promoting attendance at conferences and meetings arranged by the presbytery committee, supporting social action projects and campaigns sponsored by the presbytery, making wise use of program literature and study outlines recommended by the presbytery committee, inviting presbytery representatives to attend local committee meetings and to take part in church services devoted to the discussion of social issues.

In many presbyteries there are annual conferences or workshops for local social action leaders, where recommendations are made for church programs and plans and goals are presented.

The Division of Social Education and Action. The Presbyterian program of study and action relating to social issues is administered by the Division of Social Education and Action of the Board of Christian Education, with offices in the Witherspoon Building in Philadelphia.

The Division of Social Education and Action is related administratively to the Board of Christian Education, one of the four major Boards of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. Its work is supervised by a Committee on Social Education and Action, set up by the General Assembly, with a membership of six persons from the Board of Christian Education, three from the Board of National Missions, two from The Board of Foreign Missions, and nine from the Church at large (six of whom are lay men or women), including a non-Board representative from the National Council of Presbyterian Women's Organizations and a non-Board representative from the National Council of Presbyterian Men.

The Division reports to the General Assembly every year through the Assembly's Standing Committee on Social Education and Action. This committee reviews the work of the Division and makes appropriate recommendations.

The social pronouncements of the General Assembly, over the years, determine the program of the Division of Social Education and Action. They prescribe the nature and scope of the Division's work. *Every detail of the Division's operation is keyed to an official declaration of the Presbyterian Church.*

It can be stated that the social action program of the Presbyterian Church, as developed and promoted by the Division of Social Education and Action, has a threefold justification: (1) the teachings of the Bible, (2) the historic standards of the Presbyterian Church, and (3) the pronouncements of the General Assembly. These are the authorization by which the Division does its work.

General Assembly Speaks

That General Assembly should pronounce on social issues is not a revolutionary innovation. For more than one hundred and fifty years the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.,

ough its General Assembly, has ued timely deliverances on public ues and on questions affecting the ial behavior of Christians.

In its social deliverances, the Gen- l Assembly attempts to show how ristian principles "apply to all so- l, moral, economic, national, and ernational relationships in our y." The pronouncements express conviction that "Jesus Christ is final authority over all human in its social as well as in its in- idual aspects."

onouncements in the Making

General Assembly's pronounce- nts on social matters are the prod- t of a democratic group process in ich a large number of qualified per- ns, both lay and clergy, take part. e procedure may be outlined thus:

1. Many months before the meet- of General Assembly, the Com- ttee on Social Education and tion of the Board of Chris- n Education, working through sub- mmittees, drafts a number of commended social deliverances. embers of the staff of the Division Social Education and Action assist e committee in its work on pro- uncements.

2. The proposed pronouncements e submitted to the Board of Chris- n Education for study and trans- ission to the General Assembly with y comment that the Board may de- re to make. In this action, all forty- e members of the Board of Chris- n Education, representing all sec- ns of the Church, participate fully d freely.

3. The proposed pronouncements re then transmitted by the Board of hristian Education to the General ssembly. They are printed and ailed to every commissioner for reful study, prior to the meeting of e Assembly.

4. In the General Assembly, the roposed pronouncements from the oard of Christian Education are re- rred to the Standing Committee on ocial Education and Action, along ith communications and recommen- ations from the General Assembly self and from churches, presbyteries, nd synods throughout the Church.

The Standing Committee is com- osed of twenty-two lay and minis- rial commissioners, one from each f the General Assembly's voting sec- ons.

There is no way of knowing the composition of this important committee in advance. Soon after the convening of the Assembly, each voting section holds a caucus to choose its representatives on this and other standing committees.

5. The Standing Committee on Social Education and Action studies the various communications referred to it, giving major attention to the recommendations from the Board of Christian Education. On the basis of these papers, but with a large measure of freedom and initiative within the definition of its task by the Assembly, the Standing Committee prepares its report. Many hours are spent in the preparation of this report. A member of the staff of the Division of Social Education and Action is usually present as a resource person. The completed report is often quite different in form and composition from the recommended pronouncements as submitted by the Board of Christian Education.

6. The Standing Committee's report is brought finally to the General Assembly for consideration. The session in which the report is reviewed and debated usually occurs late in the Assembly, in order to give the Standing Committee sufficient time to complete its work. The report is printed and distributed among the commissioners on the preceding evening. It is thoroughly considered by the entire General Assembly. As amended and approved, it then becomes the social deliverances of the General Assembly.

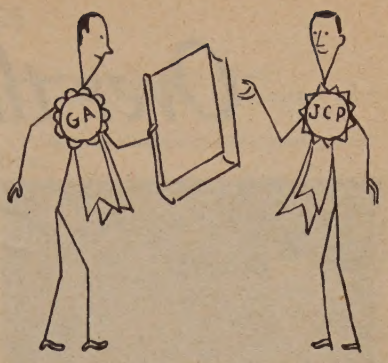
The Mind of Christ

The purpose of the General Assembly in formulating its social deliverances is primarily to discover the mind of Christ in relation to contemporary problems. The "social climate" of the Church is taken into account, but the pronouncements are not based on an "opinion poll" of Presbyterians across the country. They represent an earnest effort on the part of a large group of sincere persons, working in a thoroughly democratic way, to apply Christian principles to today's social issues.

Using the Pronouncements

The pronouncements can be used in the local church in many ways:

1. The minister may bring them to the attention of the members of the session. A meeting of the session may be devoted to the study of them.



2. The pronouncements may be used to encourage local groups to initiate proposals and recommendations. A deep concern of the social education and action committee, or of an individual in the church, becomes the basis of a recommendation that is submitted to the session, which in turn may submit it to presbytery.

3. Copies of the pronouncements may be distributed among selected church leaders and members.

4. The pronouncements may be interpreted in midweek meetings, church forums, evening services, and meetings of women's and men's organizations.

5. The pronouncements may be studied by older youth groups, young adult groups, adult Bible classes, women's circles, and special groups organized for the purpose.

6. The social education and action committee of the local church may make a digest of the pronouncements for circulation among church members.

7. Selected pronouncements may be printed in the church bulletin.

After all, the purpose of the General Assembly in its social deliverances is not completely fulfilled until every member of every church has been stirred and challenged by them.

Teamwork

The local committee is part of the social action team of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Other members of the team are the social education and action committees connected with presbyteries, synods, and the General Assembly. The Division of Social Education and Action is counselor and co-ordinator. From its office at 830 Witherspoon Building, Philadelphia 7, Pa., information is available about leadership training courses, seminars, workshops, study guides, films, recordings, books, and pamphlets.

Over the Crossroads Desk

Come in! Let's talk about CROSSROADS. I want to know some of the problems you have using it, and occasionally I'd like to tell you a few of the problems we have in the Witherspoon Building editing it!

One of the frequent requests we have received is for some cross-reference between CROSSROADS and the teacher-parent magazines so that many of you may see more explicitly ways in which CROSSROADS helps you in your job as parents and teachers. Of course, we do not want uniformity in the study material provided for children, youth, and adults; but it is possible occasionally to see some correlation among the magazines.

The most obvious correlation—and it is an important one—derives from the fact that in the *Christian Faith and Life* lessons we are all studying the same theme this year: "Jesus Christ." Children, parents, and grandparents are on the same quest: to discover who Christ is, what he has done, and what he does for us today.

In the *junior department* the children are reading *The King Nobody Wanted;* are you, parents of juniors, reading it too? It will be a real help to you in your adult study, for it gives you a continuous narrative into which you can fit the "highlight" lessons in CROSSROADS. Junior lessons for Oct. 7 and 14 deal with the same subject as adult *Christian Faith and Life* lessons for Oct. 14, 21, 28, and Nov. 4. The junior lesson for Oct. 21 and the adult lesson for Nov. 11 both consider the birth of Jesus Christ. The junior lessons for Nov. 11 and 18 tie in with the adult lesson for Nov. 18.

Parents of *junior highs* will note some similarity between their lessons in CROSSROADS on Nov. 11 and those in *Counsel* on Dec. 16, 23, and 30. On Nov. 18 these parents will be studying Jesus' baptism and temptation, the same subject that their children have considered throughout October and on Nov. 4. The lessons for adults and junior highs on Nov. 25 are somewhat similar.

There is no lesson correlation this quarter between CROSSROADS and the senior high magazine *This Generation,* because these young people are studying the life and work of Paul.

The "Book for Christian Study" this quarter is a series of plays on the life of Christ. Obviously, this study has close relation to the entire year's work in all departments.

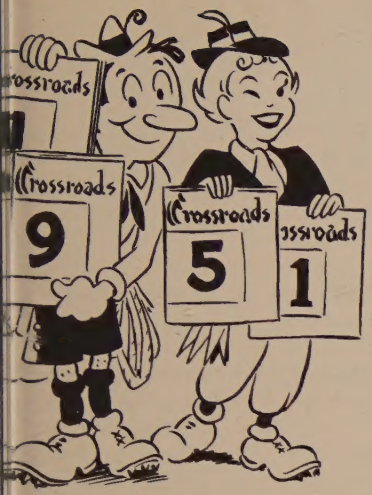
With this issue a new name appears on the CROSSROADS masthead. It is my pleasure to introduce to you the assistant editor for adult publications: MISS DORIS CAILLIET. She began work with us on October 15, 1950, and immediately became of invaluable help. The study discussion guide for the book *The Man Born to Be King,* on page 74, was her first project; she has also written some of the later International Uniform Lessons for this quarter.

Miss Cailliet comes to us from an interesting background. Her father, Dr. Emile Cailliet, is professor of Christian philosophy at Princeton Theological Seminary and one of the leading authorities in our day on the French philosopher, Pascal. Miss Cailliet attended Wilson College, was graduated from Scripps College, and has a master's degree from the University of Pennsylvania in the field of English literature. She has studied in the College of Christian Education at Princeton and has taught at Pikeville College, Pikeville, Ky. Born in France, Miss Cailliet has lived in California and Pennsylvania. Each issue of our magazine will reflect increasingly her diverse experience and catholicity of interest. The picture in the lower right-hand corner of this page was *not* posed; she has been hard at work ever since she came.

George L. Hunt

Editor, CROSSROADS

ANNUAL INDEX TO CROSSROADS



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• CHRISTIAN FAITH AND LIFE

The Lord of Christian Faith and Life

This manual will help you to think your way into the subject of this year's work—the study of the life of Christ. It is designed to encourage a thoughtful and well-considered approach to the theme of the curriculum. The manual has three ends in view, corresponding to the three sections into which it is divided. In Part I, "Basic Questions," some major problems of interpretation are reviewed. Part II, "Age Group Studies," seeks to show how the study of Jesus Christ is related to the teaching of children, youth, and adults. The Supplement seeks to facilitate the most fruitful use of the manual for study. **1 to 4 copies: 60¢ each. 5 or more copies: 50¢ each.**

The Work and Words of Jesus

BY ARCHIBALD M. HUNTER

This is an illuminating account of the life and teaching of Jesus. Writing with a pleasing combination of sound scholarship and simplicity of style, Dr. Hunter presents his material in three sections. The first contains a discussion of the sources of our information about Jesus, and a sketch of the geographical, historical, and religious background against which the Christian story took place. In the second section, Dr. Hunter deals with the years of Jesus' life before the ministry and offers significant insights into the meaning of the temptation. The ministry itself is the subject of the third and main section. **$2.50**

• "GROWING OLDER"

The Best Is Yet to Be

BY PAUL B. MAVES

Addressed directly to men and women beyond middle age, this book deals specifically with the special problems of older people. The author aims to help his readers to respond creatively to the challenge of the changes and conflicts that everyone must face in some degree as he grows older. Written with sympathy for and knowledge of the psychological problems of older people, the book enables each reader to gain an understanding of himself and to see that many opportunities for happy living exist in the years of later maturity. **$1.50**

• THE PROGRAM GUIDE

These Found the Way

EDITED BY DAVID WESLEY SOPER

In this unusual book thirteen people tell in their own words the personal experiences that led to their acceptance of Protestant Christianity. Striking, intimate, and genuine, these accounts include those of converts from atheism, Communism, Judaism, and Roman Catholicism, as well as converts from indifference. The experiences described by these interesting men and women will find echoes in the hearts and minds of many readers. **$2.50**

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